

THE  
COURAGE  
OF JEAN  

---

BONE



Presented to

*Beatrice Thackray*



*Collecting for  
Self Denial.*

"Be thou an Example."

*James A. Mason, Secy  
for Capt. Gray.*

C.O.

*R. Robinson*

Serjt Major

Date *24* 19*20*







‘ Jean clasped her brown hands round her knees.’  
C. J.



# THE COURAGE OF JEAN

A Story of Good Cheer

By

FLORENCE BONE

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J. ALFRED SHARP

THE COURT OF THE

of the

of the

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'Only one this morning, doctor,' she said, handing Morris a legal-looking envelope.

He looked at it, puzzled. As far as he knew he had done nothing that put him within the clutches of the law. Then he tore open the envelope. The next moment a low whistle brought back Mrs. Duffy full of curiosity.

'No bad news, I hope, doctor,' she said, turning a very interested eye on her master.

'Mrs. Duffy, no doubt you, being a Scots-woman, would consider it the best of news,' said Morris, who, though he was staggered, could not forbear the teasing of his comfortable housekeeper. 'It's a hoax, of course, and I shall have a wire presently to say so; but, according to this stiff and stilted document, I have had a fortune left me.'

'The Lord be praised!' ejaculated Mrs. Duffy. 'There's none in all London deserves it better.'

'Now that's rubbish, and you know it,' declared Morris. 'Here am I busy from morning to night with the finest profession in the world——'

'Humph! And say mostly all night while ye're about it,' put in Mrs. Duffy. 'For a crew of ungrateful and feckless——'

'Bairns,' added Morris, with a smile, attacking his breakfast.

Mrs. Duffy stood near the door with folded arms, and showed no sign of departure. He looked at her as he spoke. Some of his physic would have made little impression on

the bairns in question without Mrs. Duffy's energies behind it.

'Ah weel, the bairns,' said the housekeeper. 'They canna help the life they're plunged into.' Who's left ye the wee fortune, laddie? I suppose it's come from some chield safe in his grave.'

'It has,' said Morris. 'And I wish that he had remained above ground to squander it himself. But it's none so wee.'

'I'm right glad, and siller shouldna be squandered,' remarked Mrs. Duffy severely. 'Yer mother was from over the Border, and she would have telt ye sae. It's canny stuff that's useful at times. Is it that uncle of yours, honest man, who has died in foreign parts?'

'It is my uncle's fortune, Mrs. Duffy,' said Morris seriously. 'But whether he was such an exactly honest man is maybe a matter of opinion. If he had been, would he have left his only sister to work herself to death in the slums of Hoxton for her man and her boy, and never raised a finger to help her? Do you think I want his villa at Mentone, and his grouse-moor in the highlands, and his sound and sure investments when he let my mother die of overwork because she married the lad she loved when he was an Edinburgh student?'

'Mercy!' cried Mrs. Duffy. 'Is it as big as yon?'

'Bigger, I am afraid. What could not Eustace Carmichael have done to set my

father free to use his brains with some of that money? I don't want it, and I believe I won't have it.'

'Na, na; ye'd never let it go begging!' cried Mrs. Duffy. 'Blood is thickest when a lad comes to make his will, Dr. Warenne, and yon man found it so. Hoots, laddie, ye need not weery. It's easy spendin' money. Ye'll find a way.'

'I shall no longer be one of themselves, working hard like themselves for my bread, and not much butter, when I go to my poor sick folks,' said Morris. 'I don't believe in wealth.'

'Humph!' ejaculated Mrs. Duffy, turning to go. 'Well, as it is no such a wee fortune, doctor,' she said, 'I think with your consent I'll step out and get myself a new doormat, for ours is maist wore away by the broken boots o' those who never paid their bills, I ken weel.'

'Get what you like,' laughed Morris ruefully. 'At least, you shall be comfortable.'

He rose from the table and went out to his surgery. Albert had finished his task of cleaning the red lamp, and was standing on the corner doorstep gazing pensively down the street.

'Albert!' said Morris sharply.

His youthful assistant turned to attention with a jerk.

'Would you like a fortune, Albert?' asked Morris.

Albert looked at his employer as though



he were one of his own most nervy patients.

'Wot yer gettin' at, sir?' he murmured. 'Don't yer think as I'd like ter go to the picters as h'orfen as I wanted? It'd tike a fortin, doctor.'

There was something wistful in Albert's little cockney face. Morris put sixpence down on the surgery table.

'There, Albert,' he said. 'I'm afraid you will never make a professional window-cleaner; but you can have an extra night at the pictures. Now be off with those bottles, and don't drop your head into the clouds and them into the mud while you study rival posters. Ha, Mr. Magson, what can I do for you? It wouldn't be good for either your trade or mine, if we ever owned to being out of sorts.'

'No, sir—right, doctor,' replied the small substantial man, with neat sandy head and carefully trimmed moustache, who had come into the surgery. 'And I may say in confidence to you, Dr. Warene, that my business is booming. A bit of capital—that's all that is wanted to turn it into a regular "Boots, Cash Chemists" in a small way, so to speak, instead of a corner druggist's in Conduit Street. But that'll come, sir, that'll come. It was my landlady, Mrs. Spender, asked me to step in before I opened the shop to ask you for another bottle of that liniment. Bad for business, as I said to her. Ha! Ha! But it's not doctoring that's a money-making concern down this way since the war stopped.

It all goes over the counter for margarine and kippers. Eh, what?’

‘Money,’ said Morris Warenne, looking at his neighbour, ‘is a nuisance.’

‘A--what?’ demanded Henry Magson.

‘A nuisance, Magson. To tell you the truth, I find myself with more than I know what to do with. Don’t come here and talk to me about money. I have had a fortune left to me by to-day’s post, and I don’t want it.’

‘My goodness—me!’ said Henry Magson, backing towards the door. ‘You’re a rarity, Dr. Warenne—a rarity, sir. It takes no experience to spend a fortune. It’ll come quite easy, doctor. I congratulate you. And so will all Pilgrim Street, aye, and Royal Square, and every back attic and cellar round the Conduit Street shops, if you give ’em half a chance. And if you don’t, gossip will.’

‘I’m afraid so,’ groaned Morris. ‘I shouldn’t have told you.’

‘Good news will out—but not from me,’ returned the little chemist cheerfully. ‘I’m a secret man like yourself, and know a many stories that would surprise you. They’ve been told over my counter in confidence, and there they have remained.’

‘Ah!’ smiled Morris. ‘You should get yourself a wife, Magson.’

Henry Magson shook his head.

‘A chancy thing, marriage,’ he said. ‘A chancy thing. My wife, doctor, is my little business; and when I stand outside the shop

at dusk and look at those three colours that I took over with it from the old-fashioned chap who came before me, my castles in the air'd be hard to beat.'

'Tut, tut, man,' laughed Morris as he consulted his case-book and pumped his bicycle. 'It's cold comfort, is that.'

'Then take your own advice, doctor,' chuckled the chemist as he departed.

'Ah, we never do that in my trade,' laughed Morris.

He sprang on to his bicycle, an old shabby thing so unattractive in appearance that it had spent many an hour leaning alone against frowsy walls and never yet been stolen. It did not occur to Morris that he could now provide himself with any means of locomotion that he chose as he ran up broken stairs to see a sick child or bent over a white-faced baby who lived underground.

Morris was nearly run over by a huge dray just outside the Foundling as he skimmed absent-mindedly along after his morning round. His sudden end would have solved difficulties and his fortune gone to the State. The fact surprised him into realizing that nothing was farther from his desire.

'At least I will make my will first,' he said to himself with a laugh as he shot across Holborn into Chancery Lane and turned into an old by-way. 'I'll see that the dear old man gets back a bit of his own before I tumble under some plutocrat's car on my way home. Great Jupiter! I'm a plutocrat



myself. Well, the job doesn't fit me. Fate's made a bad error this time, and nobody will see that more readily than Uncle Carmichael's lawyer.'

Morris got off his bicycle before a stately house that had once been a beautiful home. Being out of his own slums he carried his machine into the hall, consulted a brass plate, and ran up to the top floor. He was ushered into a business-like office above the tree-tops of the yellowing planes. A dapper man of forty years or so, with a sharp dark face, rose as he entered and held out a cordial hand. Morris was suddenly conscious that he felt shabby, disinclined, and filled with a desire to be anywhere but in the offices of Messrs. Harding & Flear.

'I received a communication from you this morning,' said Morris.

Herbert Flear nodded.

'Dr. Warene?' he inquired pleasantly.

'Yes.'

'Ah! May I congratulate you? Mr. Carmichael has been a client of ours for many years, though singularly little communication has passed between us. I think you were not in correspondence with your late uncle?'

'I never saw him in my life,' replied Morris, 'or remembered his existence for the last ten years. I was at the front during the war. Has he been in ill health long?'

'Not at all, I believe—died suddenly. It would be a surprise to you.'

'Oh, it surprised me all right,' said Morris.

'I never expected a penny of his money—or knew what he had. And—well, the fact is, Mr. Flear, that I don't want the man's fortune.'

'You don't want——'

'No, I don't want it. And there must be somebody else who does. Let him, her, or it have the chance then. It did old Carmichael no good. It won't help me. I don't want it.'

Herbert Flear was accustomed to control his features. He looked at Morris as though that young and struggling Bloomsbury doctor was a strange and newly arrived specimen at the Zoo. His voice was rather severe when he spoke.

'You are—very unusual in your attitude,' he said. 'Nevertheless it is the duty of my firm to administer the late Mr. Carmichael's estate. I had better go into details with you. The moor in Scotland might be a fine one, but it has been neglected. Probably you will run down and see the place for yourself. You might find some wild shooting.'

'No, no,' interrupted Morris. 'I have had my holiday. I have no time for more.'

Mr. Flear smiled slightly.

'There is a good house,' he added, 'in fairly decent repair. It has not been empty.'

'Who lives there?' asked Morris, with a sort of idle impatience, caring nothing for the reply. When it came, it roused in him the first touch of real interest in his inheritance.

'Well,' said Mr. Flear, putting the tips of his fingers together and clearing his throat, 'in a sense nobody lives there; but it seems that the house has been lent—not let—by your uncle for more than twenty years to an old college friend or something of that nature. This man was an eccentric scientist; it is an old turreted place, and he carried out there weird experiments which came to nothing. Strangely enough, he died a week or two after your uncle.'

'So the place is empty. Did he live alone?'

'I seem to have heard something about a daughter. But at any rate, if so, she has left the place—probably was glad to do so. A girl of to-day must have been pretty tired of living among bats and owls. The keys of Gairlie are now in the possession of Anderson, the only keeper—a most reliable Scotchman, though any correspondence is carried on by his wife. Neither is much of a scholar.'

Morris said nothing for a moment.

'What is the girl's name, and where is she said to have gone?' he asked at length rather brusquely.

'I can't tell you that,' said Mr. Flear regretfully. 'She has of course made her own arrangements, and probably never dreamed herself that her godfather would leave her the place. That is of course mere village gossip communicated by the Andersons. We have never had direct dealings with Gairlie until now—only with Mr. Carmichael, who left the place alone, and cared nothing for it.'



'Then you don't of course know whether the girl is provided for,' continued Morris in the slightly peremptory tone well known to slum mothers when they had not followed his directions.

'I expect so,' was the cheerful reply. 'They must have lived on something.'

Morris rose to his feet and held out his hand.

'I'm afraid you've already had bother over this job,' he said. 'And you may have more. I'm not enthusiastic about it. You'll find me a disappointing fellow as a landowner, and entirely inclined to shuffle the thing on to you. But—I should be grateful if you would get me this lady's address. I—must communicate with her.'

'I will do my best,' said Herbert Flear. 'Probably it will be quite easy. She has no claim on you,' he added.

'I have turned her out of her home,' said Morris.

'Not at all,' declared the lawyer. 'In all probability she jumped at the chance to depart.'

Morris bade the lawyer good-morning, and cycled twice round the Law Courts without thinking of what he was doing. Then he cut into Holborn and along the narrow homelike streets, until he reached Pilgrim Street. A summons to an accident awaited him, and he forgot his inheritance completely. It was seven o'clock, and his surgery hours were over before he was free at last to give it another thought. Then he banged his door behind

him, and turned along the narrow street towards Royal Square.

Pilgrim Street was alive with children. It had once been a place of beautiful homes, and the tall narrow houses still contained panelled halls which had a countrified and spacious look when their doors stood open and their shallow staircases could be seen.

Morris paused for a moment before a window lighted already, where the shutters were just going up. It was No. 11, and it was difficult to tell whether the room within was a private dwelling or a little shop. A young woman in spectacles was busy within, and arranged along the window-sill was a row of coloured pots and jars and beautifully-printed cards. One of them caught Morris's eye.

Manage with bread-and-butter  
Until God sends the jam.

Morris passed on with a frown.

'I suppose the jam has come,' he said aloud, as he turned the corner. 'Well! There's powder in it. But whether God or man put it there, it is not for me to say. Perhaps the old man can tell me.'

Morris turned as he spoke into the quiet leafy Bloomsbury square from which the fashionable world had long passed away. It was now mostly a place of hospitals and offices, but a few flowers bloomed smuttily under the plane-trees. Here and there a doctor or some eccentric thinker still had his home in the old enclosure.

The place was very quiet after business hours. The gleam of its lamps among the trees, with here and there a solitary light in some upper window, and the hum of Russell Square in the distance, suddenly quieted Morris. He came to the steps of a Jacobean house where, strange to say, the door was open. Those who are loved by their neighbours are seldom robbed, and Richard Pryme was one of that company.

‘The old man will do it once too often,’ said the young alert doctor aloud, as he turned into a cheerfully-lit hall and closed the door behind him. It was a beautiful door with heavily-embossed panels, matched in the outline of the hall into which Morris stepped. He whistled cheerfully to let his presence be known, ran up the shallow staircase, and crossed the wide landing to the door of the room that ran across the front of the house.

Apparently there was nobody in the room, though an electric lamp burned on the writing-table. The evening was drawing in chilly, and there was a fire on the hearth. Morris warmed his hands, and glanced round the walls so long and so well known to him. There was a new picture of a dancing fairy, and another of a child called ‘Spring.’ Nearly all Richard Pryme’s pictures were of children, real or imaginative. There were old prints of Grimm’s tales. There was St. Francis preaching to the birds, with boys and girls listening. Over the Jacobean chimney-piece

hung that most mother-like and human Madonna della Sedia, hugging the little Holy Child to her heart as do the mothers of all ages and kinds.

'Well! And what's the result?' suddenly exclaimed a voice that shook with laughter from somewhere not far from the region of the ceiling. 'Has your brown study ended in a new disease or merely a cure for an old one?'

Morris started, and peered into the shadows. The next moment he laughed. In a distant corner of the big room, at the top of a ladder a rosy-faced, white whiskered, elderly man was looking down humorously, but with a questioning expression in the deep eyes under his shaggy brows.

'A new disease,' said Morris shortly. 'You've hit the nail on the head as usual, sir. Come down, and I'll tell you the symptoms.'

'Don't give it to me,' said Richard Pryme, descending from his ladder with a book in his hand which he laid on the writing-table. It was a volume of fairy tales.

'It couldn't touch you,' declared Morris ruefully. 'I have had an awful blow to-day, Richard.'

'A blow! My dear lad, what has happened?'

'Old Carmichael is dead.'

'Well!' There was the sound of faint laughter in Richard Pryme's voice. 'I didn't know you were attached to him, Morris.'

'I barely knew that I was even related to him,' growled Morris. 'The man has left me his money—more than I know how to spend or use, and God knows I don't want it. I'm a working man like the rest of my neighbours. I don't believe in wealth. Wasn't I named by my father and mother after that big-hearted artist who lived in this very part of London and spent all his money in teaching the world what beauty meant?'

'And he did it,' agreed Mr. Pryme. 'The money helped him. Bless ye, lad, ye needn't keep the gold.'

'But I shall have it!' cried Morris. 'It will be part of me. I shall no longer share a man's struggles because I am sharing his difficulties too. A rich man can't become a poor one, and I am that, Richard Pryme—a rich man by all that is strange and unsuitable, instead of a struggling doctor pushing his way to the top by his own efforts, and ———'

'Never letting a chance drop of allowing his own prospects to drop into the background if by so doing he can do a good turn to an old friend or a poor patient. That sort gets to a different top from the rest of the world, my boy. Well, well, Morris, you're among the landed proprietors and the plutocrats. It's like the fairy tales that I write for the little folks when I am tired of posing as a wiseacre who runs the newspapers. Perhaps Carmichael has done the only just thing that he ever did in his life,



poor chap. He's gone, and bless my life, Morris, do you own that pink-and-white villa on the Riviera among the roses?'

'I do,' said Morris gruffly.

Richard Pryme threw back his head and laughed.

'I should fill it with consumptive slum children,' he said. 'It would be enough to make Eustace Carmichael hound you out of it from his grave. When did you hear this startling news?'

'This morning,' said Morris, wheeling up a chair to the hearth and seizing the poker which he was fond of wielding when he was moved or puzzled.

'Richard,' he said hesitatingly.

'Yes,' replied the old man, looking affectionately out of his big chair at the young one.

'You'll let me—er—give you a bit of your own back out of this.'

'I have given you nothing, Morris,' was the gently-spoken answer. 'Nothing—it is you who long ago made life worth living to me when I had lost its incentive. I am a very happy man, as you know.'

Morris looked across with reverence at the man whose age was somewhere in the sixties, but who had never really grown up, as every child soon discovered.

'Do you remember that day when my father died?' he said. 'When you came down to our Hoxton slum-house, and found me a miserable bewildered schoolboy who had just

been told by a dry old lawyer that my father had left exactly enough money to pay his outstanding debts and that I should have to work for my living then and there?'

'I wanted a boy,' said Richard Pryme. 'I wanted you. Were you not my oldest friend's son? And you were a nice lad, Morris. Sometimes I am half sorry that you are grown up. The holidays were good times for us both. It's only your own strong will that made you hang out that red lamp in Pilgrim Street instead of in Royal Square.'

'And fill up your old place with the smell of drugs and dirt and disease? It was likely, wasn't it? I had to be independent somehow at last, when you had paid everything for me. But I have not told you the worst,' continued Morris.

'Let us have the worst.'

'It seems that the shooting-box was lent to a broken-down scientist who conducted experiments there. He and his daughter had lived there for twenty years, and the countryside seemed to expect that Uncle Carmichael would leave one of them the place. Well! This eccentric is dead, and the girl has disappeared. Report in the person of Mrs. Anderson, who is not much of a scholar, says that she has gone to her aunt. So far so good, but has she? I meanwhile have turned her out of house and home. The thing is unthinkable.'

'She may have gone with alacrity.'

'So Flear says, but she may not. Man,

the girl has far more right to the money than I have. Carmichael was her godfather, it seems, and her father's friend. A different kind of friend from you.'

'It takes all kinds to make a world,' said Richard Pryme.

'It could do without that kind——'

'I am not sure about that, Morris. One doesn't know what their use is, but Mr. Flear can find the lassie. What are lawyers for?'

'Making mountains out of molehills, and then charging for the excavations,' said Morris. 'It seems to me that Flear is not keen. The girl is got rid of, and the place will let for more money with the house at liberty. As if I wanted more——'

Morris groaned.

'What is her name?' asked Mr. Pryme. 'You can't disappear nowadays on a plain, straightforward journey to London or anywhere else—not if you want to do so.'

'The queer thing is that nobody seems to know her name. This Mrs. Anderson's fist is a big job to read, and she calls her Miss Janet, or Effie, or Maggie, or something Scotch; but it might be any of them. Neither of us could make it out. Flear is to send a letter for Anderson to forward to the girl asking her to communicate with him. I suppose that is all that we can do; but I am not going to sit down under it. I must find that girl.'

There was silence in the room where many hearts' histories had been lived out. Old



PRESENTLY HE BEGAN TO SING, IN A GOOD TENOR  
VOICE.





problems are unchanged in new settings. A breath from old Bloomsbury seemed to pass through the room while the plane-trees rustled, and the hum of London sounded, a dear, familiar rumble.

Morris moved away from the fire to the piano that stood at the end of the room. He sat down and played softly, with fingers that knew how to bring very sweet music from the fine instrument which was his one hobby, and which had been put in this room for him.

Presently he began to sing in a good tenor voice a setting of his own to some old-fashioned words of Ben Jonson.

Give me a look, give me a face  
That makes simplicity a grace,  
Robes loosely-flowing, hair as free,  
Such sweet neglect more taketh me  
Than all the adulteries of art;  
They strike my eyes, but not my heart.

'I wonder what the Scottish lassie is like,' said old Richard Pryme to himself as he listened to the song.

Morris came back presently, and leaned his arm on the chimney-piece. He took up a little card that was lying there. It was one that Mr. Pryme had bought that day in the queer little shop in Pilgrim Street. Morris read the words of an old folk-song idly:

Friday Christ died upon the tree  
For other folk as well as me.

'That's why I don't want the money,' he said.

'That may be why it has come to you,' was the reply. 'You have to find the other folk.'

'It shan't be for lack of trying if I don't,' replied Morris, as Mrs. Sykes, Mr. Pryme's factotum, entered with coffee, turned on the lights, and laid the evening paper beside her master.

## CHAPTER II.

### The Lass with the Light Heart.

His kin was for ane of a higher degree,  
Said, 'What had he to do with the likes of me?'  
Appose I was bonnie, I wasna for Jöhnnie,  
And werena my heart licht, I wad dee.

*Grizel Baillic.*

THE voice of a girl went singing over the heather. Nobody heard her except a shepherd, and he joined in the old ballad as he jogged home. Jean Grame sat on a springy tuft of the moor that she had loved all her life, and most people might have said that nothing existed on this September day to make her heart light. But it was made that way, and on its own courage it had always carried a good many of other people's troubles.

'I wonder where the wee laddie is?' said his sister aloud. 'Gone with the raggie-taggle gypsies to say good-bye to Gairlie? He will have to stop his wandering Jew ways in London; but then of course he will go to school. Poor wee laddie! I wonder if he will have to give up his kilt.'

Jean smiled, and then stifled a sigh in the making. She clasped her brown hands round her knees, and looked down at her shabby skirt. It was an old friend, for she did not remember when it was made by Kirsty Mac-

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nab, who helped her to run up most of her clothes. She and Kirsty often admired their handiwork; but Jean wondered whether her new black clothes would appear as well before Aunt Helena Charwood in Bulow Place.

The sun was going down into the sea below the heather. Jean could hear it idly lap the shore on the edge of the village of Gairlie. In the expanse of blue lay some of the mysterious isles of the western sea, looking both mystic and fairylike in the red glow of the dying afternoon.

Jean Grame had spent most of her life at Gairlie. She could dimly remember a crowded house in a London street, and then a long wandering about England and cheap Continental places. Life had always been made romantic, even merry by her father, as long as he had a penny in his pocket; but there had been often tracts of time when those were very few.

Jean's mother lay in a little quiet churchyard in the south of England, and it was after her death that Eustace Carmichael offered a refuge at Gairlie to Francis Grame and his daughter. It had been gladly accepted, and they had never left it again.

Jean had never been to school. Her father had taught her in his queer, eccentric, yet clever fashion, and she was not badly educated. Then had come the summer, when he had made a little money, and had suddenly determined that she should be taught French. That decision had brought Clare

Romane to Gairlie. She was half French and half Highland Scotch, and as unconventional and inconsequent in practical things as Francis Grame himself. He had loved her with a sort of autumn passion, and she had returned his love. They had married and been very happy for two years, and Jean had been happy too. Then Jamie was born.

Jean remembered now that stormy October night. She had been brought from her bed in the round turret room to say good-bye to Clare. Jean was a lithe curly-haired school-girl; but when she looked at the tiny boy sleeping in the old wooden cradle, and watched over by Mrs. Anderson, she forgot that she was a child herself. From that moment she took Jamie into her care, as she tried then and there to take him into her arms to kiss his queer wee face.

At that moment he had crept into Jean's heart, and Jamie had never missed his mother.

Jean rose from her seat in the heather, and stretched her arms above her head. For the first time curiosity sprang up in her about the man who had ousted her from Gairlie. She had not heard his name; for neither she nor her father had had dealings with Messrs. Harding & Flear, and since her father's death the newcomer had seldom crossed Jean's mind.

Jean had always jibbed at the mention of her godfather's money. Her brown cheek flushed now at the mere suggestion that the new owner should find Jamie and herself



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at Gairlie if he came north. Jean was going to her mother's only relative. If she could not take her in, no doubt she would be able to tell her what to do next.

'What a good thing I learnt typing to help dad!' said the girl to herself, as she turned away reluctantly from the beautiful scene below. 'Aunt Helena seemed to want me when I was a schoolgirl, that time when I could not go to London because clothes would have cost so much. 'She' will want Jamie too when she sees him—any one would; though he has a big appetite, if Dr. Macnab does say he is not strong.'

Jean frowned for a moment, and then began to sing again as she crossed the heather to the broad path which wound down the hill. There are times when only singing can keep the heart light, and this was one of them.

Jean reached a gate which hung by one hinge between mossy posts. She crossed a ragged drive, and went round to a low cottage that stood beyond the stables. The door was wide open, and a round table spread with a white cloth was drawn up to the fire. Mrs. Anderson was loading it with every Scotch dainty, for Jean and Jamie were to be her guests on their last night in Scotland.

'Eh, come ben, ma lassie,' called out the keeper's wife. 'Wee Jamie's awa' with Anderson for the last time. There's nae gettin' him to his bed. He'll be sair tired to-morrow night in London.'

'I expect we both shall, Mrs. Anderson,'

said Jean, the lightheartedness dying away in her breast. Suddenly it seemed to come to her what she was doing—going off like this from a warm, homely corner of earth, where everybody regarded her as a bit of their own, to a city of strangers and perhaps of cold hearts. Mrs. Anderson looked up from the fire as though she read the girl's thoughts.

'Ye'll come back if ye're not wanted, lassie,' she said peremptorily.

'It's not easy to come back,' said Jean.

Mrs. Anderson sat down and poured out two cups of tea.

'He was all for hisself was Mr. Eustace,' she said. 'And for hisself he was to the end, and one that hated trouble. Not like Miss Nancy, his sister, her that married against his will; and he never forgave her, but let her die poor. Robbie Dowie visited her once in a dour part of London, where he found her baking scones for her man. Her chield has got everything now; but he mayna be like his mother. He may favour his uncle, only be younger and harder. There's many like that to-day. And like as not he'll be down here to see how he can mak' more of the place before ye've got further south than Carlisle.'

'That is why I am going to-morrow,' said Jean.

Mrs. Anderson looked at her as though she were the innocent daughter of an unworldly father.

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'Miss Jean, I've kenned ye fra a baby, and I love ye weel,' she said. 'Gairlie'll be a sad place without ye and wee Jamie. And ye're bonnie, Miss Jean. Your brown eyes, and your little bits of curls, dark but edged with gold, are bonnier than they used to be. If ye had some o' them clothes as young girls come motoring in, it's my belief that folks would call ye a beauty. I know I am speakin' plain, but ye have no mither to lend ye a hand. Why are ye in sic a hurry? There's a wee cot ye can have that belongs to me. Let the young gentleman come down and have a look at ye before he gangs further. Eh, hearts have changed as well as times, if he doesna take a fancy to ye. Ye'd mak a braw bride. Wouldn't I throw an auld slipper!'

'Mrs. Anderson, stop!' cried Jean. 'I had no idea you were a match-maker.'

'Every woman is,' nodded Mrs. Anderson, 'if she's happy herself. And nowadays ye have to be whatever comes handy. It's a commercial age, and yer only chance o' pittin' up wi't is to join in, as I said when I was shamed to sell a egg for fivepence. But I've got over that.'

'Well, I am afraid I must take my eggs to another market,' smiled Jean. 'And you see I have not got those fine clothes which would make a beauty of me in spite of myself. Still, I have ninety pounds a year of my own, and the sale brought fifty. It would be riches to some people. Jamie and I will

do well. And my aunt asked for me a few years ago. I am going to surprise her to-morrow by turning up.'

'Ye'd better have writ,' said Mrs. Anderson.

'No! I want to see for myself if she wants me.'

'She's a queer body if she doesna,' was the reply, as a stampede was heard outside.

A tall shepherd and a small spindle-legged lad in a kilt appeared at the cottage door.

'Hoots, Jean, but I'm hungry,' said the tow-headed boy, entering the kitchen with a spring that landed him with his arms round Mrs. Anderson's neck.

'Ye winna hae to talk like that in London, laddie,' she said. 'Ye'll hae to speak like a fine southern gentleman, or they winna ken a word that ye say.'

'But I canna, Mrs. Anderson; I'm Scotch,' declared Jamie, his mouth already full. 'Isn't it English that they speak in London?'

'Ech, it's a gey strange tongue, mincin' and fine-like; but, puir bodies, they seem as though they couldna help it,' said Mrs. Anderson. 'Do your best, and it'll serve, laddie.'

Jamie sat on the arm of his sister's chair. His black-and-green kilt was spread over her shabby serge; one rather grimy hand was round her neck. His shock head revealed the grace of hers, and her eyes were grave as she rose and carried him off to his bed.

'And to-morrow night ye'll be sleepin' in

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a braw London hoosie, not in a cot with a but and a ben,' put in Mrs. Anderson in an encouraging tone.

'We shall wish we were,' said Jean in a firm voice that strove to come from a light heart.

It was five o'clock next day when the Scotch express slowed down into St. Pancras. Jamie was asleep, and Jean struggled with a forlorn feeling as the train rumbled past London's back gardens. There was not a welcome for Jamie and herself waiting behind one of them.

'Were we fools to come?' she asked herself in sudden panic. 'No, it was what dad told me to do. Aunt Helena Charwood is my mother's own sister. Of course she will want us.'

Jean awoke Jamie, smoothed him down, set his Scotch bonnet at a less rakish angle, left the train, and found the luggage-van. For a long time they got no farther; but after twenty bewildering minutes had passed, they put their old-fashioned trunks in the left-luggage office and themselves into a taxi. Out across the crowded street they swung, and round corners into Central London's squares and streets. Jamie stood at the window and stared in amazement.

'Where are we going, Jean?' he asked in an awed voice.

'Off with the raggle-taggle gypsies, I think,' replied Jean, turning half a sob into a laugh.



'Don't put your hands on the cab door, Jamie. You must at least try to look clean when we reach Bulow Place.'

Jamie obediently drew his hands down his face, and left two blue streaks. Before Jean could produce her handkerchief, the taxi swung round a sharp corner, slowed down beside the curb, and stopped at No. 11 Bulow Place. The straw pilgrim-basket was flung out on to the pavement and the old gladstone-bag beside it. The taxi door was shut with a bang, and the cab whirled away. Jean and Jamie stood on the pavement, and watched it out of sight. Both felt, without confessing the fact, that they would have liked to run after it, and hang on to the back because it seemed like their last refuge. The next moment Jean turned to her little brother with her most businesslike air.

'Now, Jamie,' she said. 'This is the house.'

She pointed to a flight of immaculate steps, a bright green door, a glittering knocker, and an iron balcony above.

Bulow Place was a by-way that had not yet been absorbed by the world of business and boarding-houses. It was convenient for the British Museum and the Law Courts, and several of its spacious houses were still homes.

'You will sit on the steps with the luggage, Jamie,' went on his sister, 'while I go in and talk to Aunt Helena. You see she does not know you, so I must go first and tell her about you. Now, you understand. You

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are not to leave the bags whatever happens, because there are thieves in London, and they might run off with our luggage.'

Jamie's eyes grew round.

'Honest, I won't leave them,' he said. 'Would I know a thief by sight? I'd love to see one. It might be a pirate, or——'

Jamie was beginning to enjoy himself. Clashed under his arm was his most cherished possession—an old paintless, tailless wooden horse, who had been dubbed Robin Gray years ago, and who was never very far from Jamie.

'You would not know a thief,' said Jean severely.

She pressed the electric button, and the door swung open. A very smart parlourmaid looked pertly at the girl in the new black garments which she and Kirsty Macnab had considered such a masterpiece. Jean hesitated rather breathlessly.

'Is my aunt—I mean is Mrs. Charwood at home?' she asked.

'Yes, miss,' said the maid.

'May I see her?' inquired Jean.

The maid looked doubtfully at the small boy in the kilt who sat stolidly on the bundles, and stared.

'Come in,' she said rather shortly.

Jean was swallowed up by a hall where her feet sank into a thick carpet, and a feeling of luxury and strangeness seemed to take her by the throat and make a prisoner of her.

She was shown into a room on the ground floor, which evidently belonged to the man of the house. It smelt pleasantly of leather and cigars, and had a leisurely, sensible feeling. Jean's spirits rose. In a few minutes she heard a rustle. The door opened, and a tall grey-haired woman entered with a look of startled curiosity on her face. She was well preserved, and dressed in the height of a rather youthful fashion. She was handsome in a cold way, and her manner was not without eagerness as she came into the room.

Jean rose and the two faced each other. A gleam that was almost warm came into Helena Charwood's light grey eyes. She took a step forward.

'Alice's girl!' she cried in a tone of conviction that sounded pleasant to Jean. 'My dear child—to appear out of the blue like this! I suppose your father is dead. Alfred, your uncle, did read a notice of the death of some Francis Grame in a scientific journal; but I never associated him with the irresponsible crank whom my sister Alice married.'

Jean stiffened slightly.

'But you did right to come straight to me—perfectly right, my dear. Let me see, Jean is your name, I believe. Ah! yes, I thought so. I do not often make mistakes. Well, it is not without piquancy, and neither are you, my dear, with those short curls. Have you had tea? No? And where is your

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luggage? At St Pancras? You must be starving, but we will discuss things upstairs in the drawing-room. What time did you leave that outlandish place in the wilds of western Scotland?’

‘Six this morning,’ said Jean. ‘Aunt Helena——’

‘Yes, yes, come upstairs, child. This is your uncle’s den, and a dull place to my mind; but he seems to like it. He is not the most malleable person in the world, or we should not live in these wilds—though Bloomsbury is convenient.’

Before Jean could reply she found herself walking up a broad staircase, crossing a spacious landing, and entering a big drawing-room, which gave her an impression of brightness that somehow did not belong to itself but only to the toys of the moment with which it was filled. A tea table stood in the window, and Mrs. Charwood drew her niece into the full light of the day that was dying.

‘Let me look at you, my dear,’ she said, examining the girl as though she were a new decoration which might or might not fit into her design. ‘Your father was a crank, and there is no place for cranks in the modern world; but Alice was a beauty in her own way when she threw herself away upon Francis Grame. Ah! You have your mother’s features; but there is a gleam of your father in your eyes, though they are pretty ones. I hope you are not a creature of dreams

as he was. But if you are, you will soon lose that in London. We are too busy for dreams.'

Mrs. Charwood laughed, and waved Jean to a cosy chair facing the long French windows which opened on to the balcony. Jean sat down; but she was uncomfortably conscious that Jamie would be getting very tired of the porch below. She thought she heard a cheerfully familiar whistle in answer to a passing dog's bark, as she accepted hot tea and drank it gratefully. It gave her courage and spirit, and a feeling of adventure sprang up in her. Still, it was a relief to think of having found a comfortable place for the night.

Jean put down her cup, and looked across at her aunt, who sat complacently behind the teapot, mentally choosing new clothes for a pretty girl who would make No. 11, Bulow Place an attractive house. Her mother's small income would pay for the clothes, no doubt.

Aunt Helena,' said Jean in the clear voice of the Highlands, but with her father's pure intonation, 'I am young and strong, and can earn my living. It is good of you to offer me a home, and it is tempting too, because I don't know what to do, and it's good to find my mother's people.'

'Dear child, of course,' replied Aunt Helena, somewhat pompously. 'I hope I have always done my duty to those immediately about me. Now, I will ring for Johnson

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to have your room ready, and perhaps we can find you something to wear this evening.'

Jean rose to her feet.

'Aunt Helena,' she said again. 'There is not only me, you know. There is Jamie—he is waiting with the bundles on the doorstep. He is such a dear. You will like him too, won't you? He is never any trouble—at least, he does not mean to be. And my money—my own money would send Jamie to school as well as buy our clothes. They have never cost much.'

'I can well believe——' began Mrs. Charwood. Then she stood still, and actually stared at her niece. She even lifted her lorgnette, but dropped it again. 'I don't understand you,' she said. 'Jamie! Who is Jamie?'

'He's my little brother, you know,' said Jean.

'Your brother!' Mrs. Charwood's voice was almost shrill. 'I never heard that Alice had more than one child.'

'Jamie is Clare's child. She was my father's second wife,' said Jean quietly, beginning to know what was going to happen. 'But he is my brother just the same. He is seven years old, and of course he must stay with me. May I bring him up? I—I am afraid he will be tired of waiting in the porch, and though he promised—he is a terror for exploring.'

'A terror! Exploring?' exclaimed Aunt



Helena in horror. 'I had completely forgotten that the designing woman who made a fool of your father after Alice's death left a boy behind her—a disgraceful state of things.'

'Oh no! we were so happy with Clare. And Jamie is——'

Mrs. Charwood waved her lorgnette.

'Whatever the child is, or has, is not my concern,' she said. 'Your uncle has an interest in a number of orphan asylums. Not one of his subscriptions has ever brought him a farthing's worth of return, but it shall do so now. The child shall be placed in an institution. I hope I am able to take a Christian view of destitution. He will be well cared for in one of the places that I have in view. Meanwhile perhaps the maids will look after him between them, and he can take his meals with Cook. She is a superior body.'

Jean drew on her gloves over hands that trembled.

'I must look after Jamie,' she said.

'I am showing you how you can do so, child,' returned Mrs. Charwood.

'You are showing me how I can get rid of him,' said Jean. 'I promised father that I would stand by him and keep him with me. I shall do it.'

'How?' barked her aunt, some old bitterness leaping into her eye.

She looked at the girl whose lips were firm, though her face was pale. Without

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recognizing it, the jaded woman of the world saw hope and strength and faith and courage in the young figure that faced her. There was not much of any of it in the house in Bulow Place—only convention. What Aunt Helena thought she felt was just irritation with an obstinate girl.

‘I shall work for Jamie,’ said Jean. ‘And some day, if necessary, he will work for me. I have got plenty of money just now, Aunt Helena, and there are places where we can stay in London. I won’t trouble you any longer, but I can’t be separated from Jamie. So—good-bye. Thank you for saying that you would take me.’

She turned to go, but her aunt put out a long thin hand.

‘Stop! stop!’ she cried. ‘You don’t know what London is like, and it is full in every corner. There is room for you here. I am offering my sister’s child a home. You must not go like this. And where are you going?’

‘Where Jamie can go,’ said Jean. ‘I will find a place.’

There was a sound in the last words which was quite as proud and perhaps as obstinate as her aunt’s. Jean hardly felt the softly-carpeted stairs up which she had come half an hour before. She walked past the amazed parlour-maid in the hall, who opened the door hurriedly. It seemed itself surprised at this tremendous upheaval under its shining knocker.

The white steps were unsullied, the straw pilgrim-basket and the old gladstone-bag stood safely within the dignity of the porch. A small, immaculate grey-haired man, in a splendidly-tailored summer suit, white spats, small shining boots, and with an ivory-handled stick in his hand, was mounting guard over them.

‘Alfred!’ exclaimed his wife in breathless exasperation, as she turned a petrified gaze upon her husband, while Jean ran down the steps in an agony. The bare-legged, tow-headed laddie in the kilt had apparently vanished into the smoky air of Central London.

## CHAPTER III.

### A Lodging in London.

O youth—O youth in London!  
Shall they ever be forgot?  
Those young and eager footsteps  
On pavements hard and hot?  
The dust is in the breezes,  
Stinks of petrol stain the air;  
But youth has come to London,  
And has found a garden there.

*Shelia Kaye-Smith.*

**A**T first Jamie was very well entertained on the top step of 11, Bulow Place. He sat squarely on the straw basket, his bare scratched knees well apart, his feet in their country shoes comfortably settled on Mrs. Charwood's expensive doormat, his blue eyes scanning the strange rush of the world about him. He wanted with all his soul to explore it, and he clasped Robin Gray spasmodically to his chest, where he was conscious of an aching void. Mrs. Anderson's scones and cookies had long ago disappeared, and Jamie knew that he was very hungry.

He looked philosophically up at the shut green door. Perhaps Joan would presently reappear and tell him to come in to tea. Jamie settled down patiently, and watched the endless stream of taxis that passed with a

whirl on their way to the northern stations. He examined a baker's cart with a personal interest; but no amount of poking produced a penny from the corner of his pocket, so he resigned himself to hunger with a yawn. Jamie had never known rebuff. Life was a thing that smiled at him, and received a smile in return. He was not expecting any other kind of experience now.

'I expect this is the way you go off with the raggle-taggle gypsies, but I wish they would come along,' he said to Robin Gray, holding in that mettlesome steed with a tight hand as an ancient four-wheeler ambled past. 'Shouldn't think they are inside that house. It's too tidy. I do wish Jean hadn't made me promise not to leave the bags, only if there is a bun-shop round the corner I haven't a halfpenny.'

Jamie gave the straw basket a slight kick. He put his old wooden horse carefully down on the step, and stood up to examine the landscape. Every door in the decorous row was closed, and he could not see into the areas. He was becoming too bored for expression. He glanced at the brass bell which Jean had touched, and wondered whether he should follow her example. The idea appealed to him, and he was stretching on tip-toe to try his luck, when somebody came up the steps behind him, and a voice said:

'Mph! Ahem! Humph! What are you doing here on my doorstep, little boy, with that curious assortment of luggage?'

The newcomer poked Robin Gray as he spoke in the spot where his tail should have been. Jamie turned round from the bell, and found himself facing a small, dapper, splendidly-groomed man, with hair as grey as his summer suit. His face was a little dried and very sallow, and he looked as though he had never crossed a muddy street in his life. In his small grey eyes there was a smaller twinkle, which Jamie saw for a second. The little boy smiled and took a step forward.

'I'm waiting for Jean,' she said. 'She's in there.'

'In there? That is my house,' said the little man in grey.

Jamie looked him up and down, and then glanced at his own kilt and the jacket out of which he was rapidly growing.

'Do you live with Aunt Helena?' he asked pleasantly.

'Wh-what?' stammered the lawyer, at whose questions more than one person had shivered with fear that day. He was sometimes under the impression that he did live with his wife much more certainly than that she lived with him; but the fact sounded blatant when stated thus.

'With Aunt Helena,' repeated Jamie. 'Jean's gone to ask her to let us come and live with her. Daddy's dead, and somebody else has to have Gairlie, and——Hi! Hoots! ma bonnie wee man! Stop him—stop thief! He's got Robin Gray. Stop him, I say, stop



him! Please take care of the bags. I can't lose Robin Gray!'

One moment Jamie stood on the steps, talking easily to Mr. Alfred Charwood. The next a small swift-footed cockney urchin had darted up the doorway, seized the wooden horse standing on the top step, and was off across the pavement as one well accustomed to the action. With a breathless nod towards the pilgrim-basket and the gladstone-bag, Jamie with flying kilt and flashing bare legs was after the person who had dared to steal his faithful wooden companion.

Without an instant's hesitation Jamie was round the corner. Beyond the next block of houses he could see a pair of bare legs and ragged knickerbockers twinkling over the pavement as the boy ran. Jamie forgot that he was tired, that he had had no tea, that he was alone in London streets. With scarlet cheeks, blazing eyes, and a chest that felt as though it would burst, he tore out of the quiet thoroughfare called Bulow Place, dodged in and out of startled groups of people, and in three minutes found himself in a big square that seemed to him like a crowded market-day.

He caught a glimpse of a huge hotel with a decorated front, he looked with feverish agony along a wide street of shops where men and women sauntered, or hurried, without a thought of Jamie Grame. A taxi swung round the corner and nearly knocked him down. A motor-bus lumbered up and disappeared in twenty seconds.

'Oh, Robin Gray!' gasped Jamie, realizing that if he stopped to give vent to his sobs he would never see his old horse again.

Between a huge dray and a panting taxi he caught sight of the little cockney who had seized his toy, poised for flight at the edge of the pavement of Russell Square. Jamie gave a lurch forward, but the traffic parted, and the boy darted through. At an awful risk to life and limb, but with a desperate desire in his heart, Scotch Jamie followed. In an instant he was careering madly along an old-fashioned street of dignified boarding-houses with a glimpse of green trees at the end.

The boy looked over his shoulder. He saw Jamie's flying feet and set face behind him, and wavered. At his right were the railings of Royal Square; but that serene old place was a cul-de-sac as far as that moment was concerned, for there was no entrance. The little Londoner made a dive for the railings. This took him more than a minute, for they were high and spiky, and his clothes were tattered. As he threw himself into the square, Robin Gray in hand, Jamie came up with him, and laid one hand on his trousers. A square piece came away with a rotten rip, but the owner was safely over.

'Oh!' exclaimed Jamie, taken aback for a second; but though he was an amateur in dodging traffic, he was an expert in climbing anything that came handy. Even the spiky railings did not exist that could daunt him.



JAMIE WAS AFTER THE PERSON WHO HAD DARED  
TO STEAL HIS FAITHFUL, WOODEN COMPANION.



The cockney was growing winded, but Jamie was just settling in. One flying leap landed him in a bed of laurels, but he picked himself up, and the next moment had grabbed his boy. The little London urchin was flabby, and the Scots lad desperate. With a whack from a sunburnt fist, Jamie had neatly laid his opponent flat, and old Robin Gray was once more clasped to his owner's heaving chest.

The Londoner, with one return blow, had fled, looking ruefully over his shoulder, and melting into the gathering dusk.

Jamie suddenly found himself out of breath, weak, and distinctly frightened, sitting on the steps of a low porch in the protecting shade of a particularly comfortable-looking front door.

He had no idea how to find his way back to Jean. His hand went up to his mouth, and came away again red, for his lip was bleeding. There was a three-cornered tear in his kilt, and a purple lump was rising over one eye.

'I'm a raggle-taggle gypsy myself,' said Jamie aloud, not without pride, but with a distinctly uncomfortable feeling that he was lost, that London was a rather big place, and that if he did find Jean again she would say that he had been fighting. Such a thing had not been entirely unknown in the north.

Jamie rose to his feet, clasped Robin Gray firmly, and looked out of the porch into the dusky square.

'I must find Jean,' he said sturdily. 'Maybe she'll be—er—frightened by herself.'

He stepped on to the pavement, and hesitated. Somehow at that moment he suddenly felt very small, and he never remembered feeling small in Scotland—but then there were not so many people about.

'Hulloa, laddie!' said a voice from the porch behind Jamie. 'Were you coming to see me? Why, it's a little stranger. And my doorstep is not a very inviting place after six o'clock on a September evening.'

Jamie turned round. He saw a rosy face that somehow did not seem so many years older than himself in spite of the fact that it was framed in bushy white whiskers under a big old hat.

'I'm Jamie,' said the little boy solemnly. 'Who are you?'

Mr. Richard Pryme nodded.

'Jamie from over the Border,' he said. 'And I am just a boy like yourself, and my mother was from Scotland.'

Jamie nodded in his turn.

'I thought you wasn't really growed up,' he said. 'Are you Santa Claus, or, I say, are you Peter Pan? Jean said I should see him in London.'

'I expect you would see him wherever you went,' said Mr. Pryme. 'You'll just recognize an old friend in Kensington Gardens. And where is Jean? If it were not nearly bedtime, I would ask you to come in to tea with me. But I expect you had yours long ago.'



'I s'pect we'll have tea with Aunt Helena,' said Jamie valiantly, in a rather husky voice. 'Yours is a nice porch. P'raps I'll come and sit in it again with Robin Gray. He's my horse. I've had him ever since I were little. That's why I had to fight to get him back—no thank you, my lip's stopped bleeding now and it doesn't hurt. Jean won't like it when she knows, I'm 'fraid, but I can 'xplain. Why! There is Jean! Jean! Jean! here I am, Jean! and I've got Robin, and I left a gentleman with the bags, didn't I, and this kind man says I can sit in his porch again; and where are we going now? Look at me, I'm a raggle-taggle gypsy myself now.'

'Oh, Jamie, Jamie!' gasped his sister, pausing on the pavement of Royal Square, and scarcely glancing towards the white-haired man on his own doorstep. He looked kind, but her head, though a sensible one, had been rather over-filled with reiterated caution by Mrs. Anderson, who had seen her depart for London with disapproving reluctance. Above everything else the canny Scotswoman had bidden her beware of chance and plausible strangers in the street.

Richard Pryme's hat was in his hand as he looked at Jean, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he did not look again into the sweet, fresh young face with all the hope of the future in it, and one or two of the shadows of the present. The old man never saw that her frock was countrified and her hat a cheap little straw. He only saw

the radiant brown eyes, the rather large firm mouth, the brow which meant purpose and the power to carry it through. He also saw that Jean was cautious, and he retreated, though not without a feeling that she needed help.

'Are we going to have tea now, Jean?' asked Jamie anxiously.

'Yes, yes, my dear,' Jean's wrath subsided as she remembered that Jamie was starving. 'With big buns if we can find them. Oh, Jamie, how could you run away? It was by the merest accident that I came this way to look for you.'

She took Jamie's hand and hurried him along. The sore feeling of indignant helplessness which Bulow Place had left in her heart was departing. Every one in London would not look at her in the same way; but for to-night she would keep to humble streets.

At the end of Royal Square she found that a narrow thoroughfare led out of it.

'Pilgrim Street,' she read aloud. 'We are pilgrims, Jamie. This street might do for us.'

'It looks a nice street,' said Jamie cheerfully. 'I hope there's a bun-shop.'

'You poor little boy, yes,' said his sister sympathetically. 'Perhaps this is one.'

The two stopped, and Jamie flattened his nose against a low many-paned window. It had once been the window of an old-fashioned parlour, standing at the left side of a high narrow house. The door was open, and Jean

glanced in. She saw a panelled place with a shallow staircase, still full of atmosphere and a kind of beauty, though it was scratched and stained in places. She did not want to go farther, and looked back into the window of the queer little shop.

There was a table just within it, on which stood coloured jars and jugs, painted toys, and figures, with here and there a little card, beautifully printed in quaint script.

Behind, the place was in firelight. On the empty table stood a small tray covered with a white cloth, and there was a teapot on an old hob. The room was panelled, and painted a soft green. A piece of boldly-coloured embroidery lay on a rush-bottomed chair as though some one had put it down hastily.

At the fire a woman was toasting a muffin. She was tall and spare, with neat fair hair, and a plain dark gown. Jean looked at her, and decided that she was still young, while Jamie spelt out the words on the little cards in the window.

‘Listen, Jean,’ he said proudly. ‘I can read well.’

Friday Christ died upon the tree  
For other folk as well as me.

‘Ah!’ said Jean. ‘I wonder how many people really think so,’ she added to herself. Such a thought had never come to her before she saw the words in print from an old folk-song.

Jamie read the next couplet:

Manage with bread-and-butter  
Until God sends the jam.

With a sudden impulse Jean pushed open what was obviously intended for a shop door, and walked in. The girl at the fire rose, and looked at the newcomers.

'I close at six,' she said. 'But I forgot to lock the door, and it seemed such a pity to shut out the last daylight. If it is some work that you want done at once, I can't do it, and that is final. I am up to the eyes. After all, I am not a machine, and mine is not machine-made needlework.'

Jean flushed and retreated towards the door.

'I am very sorry indeed, but I am afraid I did not come in to see you about any kind of work,' she said.

'I'm glad,' said the girl wearily. 'I am fed up with work. I want a holiday—any kind. But unfortunately holidays have to be paid for with pound notes.'

She put the toasted muffin on a little brass stool as she spoke, and Jamie eyed it hungrily. Ruth Robhart rose to her feet, swept the evening frock from the couch, and locked it up in a cupboard. Then she looked at Jean and Jamie inquiringly, but with something in her eyes which seemed to bring rest to herself.

'I want just the opposite—work,' said Jean gently.

The girl in spectacles looked amazed, and then pitying. She shook her head.

'And for to-night I want beds for this little boy and myself,' went on Jean. 'I thought this was a shop when I looked into the window.'

'It is,' said Ruth.

'So I came in to ask you if you could tell me whether I could find a night's lodging somewhere round here. We—are tired.'

Jean drew in her breath. She was suddenly conscious that the tears of extreme fatigue and departing hope were not far away.

'What made you come here?' said Ruth Robhart bluntly.

'The little card in the window,' replied Jean at once. 'The one that says "For other folk."'

'Humph!' was the reply. 'It may be true in the country. Don't think it is in London. I never have thought so since I had to make my own way in the world. Each one for himself and the devil take the hindmost is nearer the mark. That rhyme comes out of an old folk-song, and maybe the world was kinder when it was written. But nowadays words are easy things. If you are comfortable yourself, you don't bother much about other people. It's a cripple in Conduit Street who prints those cards, and I let him put them in my window because his father keeps a boot-shop, and they get fusty among cobbling and old shoes, and sometimes my customers take a fancy to them.'

'Yes—I did.' Jean smiled; and Ruth Robhart felt a queer little stir at her heart when

she saw the smile. In the Highlands they had felt cheered when Jean smiled, but they did not know that her smile was of a rare kind. Ruth Robhart did.

'What makes you want a night's lodging in this part of London?' she asked in her gruff voice.

'It is near the station,' said Jean. 'And I saw you through the window, and you looked kind, and I thought you were the sort to give me good advice, so I came in to ask you.'

Ruth shrugged her shoulders.

'You'll get stranded in some strange places if you judge people through windows and by half lights in that fashion,' she said. 'You had better start in London on the supposition that people are not honest, and be agreeably surprised if you find them so. I could tell you how mean they can be. Well! Well! If you turn round just where you stand, you may see something to your advantage. Mrs. Spender isn't a bad sort, and you might do worse.'

Jean turned round hastily, and saw a small card pinned to the wall behind her. Her heart gave a leap at what she read printed on it in uneven letters.

'Two small attics to let unfurnished. No attention. Low rent. 8, Pilgrim Street.'

'Why, it is this house!' exclaimed Jean. 'But Jamie and I haven't a bed or a chair to call our own.'

Ruth looked thoughtful.



'Mrs. Spender would give you a shake down for the night,' she said. 'Have you any money, if I may ask you such a personal question?'

'Oh yes,' said Jean. 'Quite enough to go on with, until I can find some work, and— but isn't furniture expensive?'

Ruth nodded.

'It is, and there again it isn't,' she said. 'It's a lot cheaper than furnished lodgings. I know every hole and corner of London. I've not been brought up in Mayfair either, and I know the ropes. If you are not too proud to listen to me, I'll show you where to get furniture. And—I'm not fond of ugliness. You can trust me.'

Jean glanced at the old green room, fast growing dark, as its owner turned rather proudly away.

'I don't know how to thank you,' she said. 'Where shall I find Mrs. Spender?'

'Ring the doorbell in the passage,' replied Ruth. 'That youngster can have tea with me while you are doing the business. There is hunger in every line of him.'

'Oh, thank you!' cried Jean, while Jamie took a step nearer the teapot and the buns on the round table. 'I never expected——'

'Neither did I,' was the reply. 'It just takes my fancy, somehow; everything doesn't. There's nothing to be grateful for. I am alone, and I please myself.'

She put her long thin hand on Jamie's shoulder, and marched him up to the fire.

'Please don't let him run away,' said Jean as she turned to go.

'He had better not try it,' replied Ruth.

Jean went out to the dilapidated passage, and listened to the echo of an old-fashioned bell die away. She thought she had never heard one that sounded so loud. In a few minutes a flopping step came from somewhere below, and out of an unexpected door appeared a slight grey-haired woman about Jean's own height.

She wore a black dress carefully brushed, a crocheted collar fastened with a black bow, and another black bow on her scanty hair. A little black apron completed her attire, and she stood still and bowed to Jean.

Jean looked at Mrs. Spender, and liked her. She had a bristling air of refinement and a mincing voice, but her eye was both wary and kindly. She had plenty of worldly wisdom, but she also had a heart. No doubt, reflected Jean, there were two sides to the suspicion of strangers in London.

'In the shop,' began Jean quite breathlessly, 'there is a notice that you have two attics to let. Would you—could I have them?'

Mrs. Spender tapped her lips with the thimble on her finger, and regarded Jean.

'That depends,' she said cautiously. 'I'm particular. A widder lidy like myself has ter be, yer know. Got any references?'

'Not in London,' sighed Jean. 'At least I have an aunt, but she won't take me in

because she won't provide for my little brother. We are from Scotland.'

'Lor', yer needn't tell me that. I've quick hearin', said Mrs. Spender. The tale sounded lame to Jean; but Mrs. Spender was well acquainted with relatives who refused to take in an extra mouth. 'My husband's mother was from Glasky,' she continued; 'and though a bit short-tempered, she was an honest body. I'm arskin' eight shillin' for the attics. I know as it's givin' of 'em away; but I'm not one to grasp, and I don't mind childer if there isn't too many. Also the rooms is empty, and I don't give attention so far up. 'Ave yer got furniture?'

'I think I could buy some,' said Jean faintly, thinking that she sounded a hopeless sort of lodger. She did not know yet how accustomed London is to emergencies.

Mrs. Spender looked at her again. She seemed to find Jean's face stimulating to thought.

'References—leastways, the want of them I might get over,' she said. 'There's not many can take me in when I looks at 'em; but furniture—it'd be a bit orkard without. Yer couldn't lie on the floor. Leastways, yer wouldn't enjoy it. An' what about cookin'?''

'Our luggage is at St. Pancras,' said Jean. 'We have some rugs and cushions. The lady in the shop says that she will show me where to get a few things. I have got some money—enough to last me until I get work.'

'Then that settles it,' said Mrs. Spender with a decisive nod. 'If Miss Ruth Robhart is a-goin' ter take yer on, why, I will. Yer would 'ave ter be up early to take her in; and then I don't believe yer'd do it, no--not if yer sat up all night ter get first start. She's 'ad ter face the music, and she knows the tune. Now, what abart ter-night?'

'Maybe—we could go back to the station,' suggested Jean.

'Nothin' o' the sort. When I does a thing, I likes to do it thorough. Go back yer shall, and get yer rugs and things; but yer can sleep in my kitchen if yer don't mind bein' a bit underground. It's cosy and quiet there, and there isn't mice. My cat Thomas sees to that. Yer can 'ave the sofy; and if the boy ain't very big, there's my late husband's chair, and he was one as knowed how ter be comfortable.'

'I don't know how to begin to thank you,' said Jean. 'You don't know what it is like when you are stranded to hear of a cosy kitchen and a couch. I'll go for the luggage at once. Perhaps—Miss Robhart—did you say?—would let me leave Jamie with her until I come back.'

'I know all about bein' stranded,' said Mrs. Spender. 'A nasty lost-dog sort of feelin' as I've experienced myself when I've been so misguided as ter be persuaded to 'ave a day at the sea in times gone by when you could go for trips. I for one don't miss 'em. Give me London.'

Jean left Pilgrim Street for St. Pancras with a warm glow at her heart.

When Jean disappeared as suddenly as she had come from the immaculate doorstep of her mother's sister, the man and woman she had left behind stared for a moment at each other as they had not stared for many years. Johnson, the parlour-maid, discreetly disappeared. It was Alfred Charwood who spoke first, as he flicked an imaginary speck of dust from his sleeve.

'Helenal' he said, straightening himself. 'What in the name of common sense do you mean by allowing a menagerie to be established on a respectable doorstep when a man comes home tired after his day's work? And what are those?'

He poked the straw basket and the ancient gladstone-bag gingerly with his stick as he spoke.

'Who was the young woman?' he added.

'My niece, Jean Grame,' replied Mrs. Charwood tartly. 'I had just offered her a home, and that was her way of accepting my kindness. That may be suitable gratitude in Scotland, but it is abominably bad manners in London. I wash my hands of the business. You can see for yourself that she has given me no chance to do otherwise.'

'Did she refuse to come here?' inquired Mr. Charwood in a shocked voice.

'Yes.'

'But why? The girl was not ill-looking

if she had been better dressed. There is plenty of room in the house, Helena. I told you it was your brother-in-law's death that I saw mentioned.'

'But I didn't believe you. The girl's clothes were indeed a scandal, but she must wear them where she chooses. I am not accustomed to have my kindness flung into my face. It shall not happen a second time.'

'The girl didn't look as though it would. That was a rather jolly youngster. Maybe he would—er—have brought a bit of life about the place.'

'Alfred Charwood!' exclaimed his wife, looking round the room into which they had retreated. 'You, the most selfish and comfort-loving creature in London——'

'We are a pair then,' said Alfred drily.

'To reproach me because I have refused—yes, refused entirely on your account to take on the responsibility of a rough ragged Scotch lad who never ought to have existed. You should be ashamed——'

'Of what?' demanded Alfred.

He often made an innocent witness shiver in court, but he seldom opposed his wife. Therefore it was the more effectual.

'Do you mean to say that you would have taken the boy as well as the girl?'

'Why not?'

'Why not!'

Mrs. Charwood had never been so exasperated in all her married life. She turned and went upstairs without another word, and



her husband lit his gas-fire, glanced out into the gathering dusk, looked for a cigar, and threw himself into the most comfortable chair that a man could possess. But his sense of comfort had gone for that evening. He heard everywhere in the silence of Bulow Place the laugh of a kilted laddie with bare scratched knees who did not hesitate to plunge into London's traffic to save an old friend. He saw Jean's blazing, indignant eyes and her brave lips. Then he heard a clock tick sonorously in the hall. A savoury smell of approaching dinner assailed him. He sighed as he rose from his chair, shrugged his shoulders, and went away to his dressing-room.

'They might have been our boy and girl,' he said aloud to the gas-fire, which gave no responsive snap and glow like burning wood. 'But of course they are not. And Alice must have left money. Probably Helena is right, the lad would have turned us out of windows, and the girl would have filled the place with her noisy young friends. After all, what is life worth unless it is comfortable? That girl had fine eyes. And the boy was a sport. But Helena is no doubt right. I wonder if they will come back for their bags. No great loss if they didn't.'

They did not come back for their bags. Mr. and Mrs. Charwood had an after-dinner engagement, and as they drove out of Bulow Place a tall spare young woman rang the bell of No. 11 with a determined hand. She

produced a paper signed by Jean Grame, and demanded the luggage. It was handed to her without demur by Johnson, who handled the straw basket with something like contempt. She became respectful as she met Ruth Robhart's eyes, and offered to wait for a taxi. The offer was rather curtly refused, and Ruth walked easily away with her burdens, and left no address. When Aunt Helena returned she vented her anxiety on Johnson, who did not scruple to reply in the same vein. When the green door with its shining knocker was barred for the night, and Mr. and Mrs. Charwood went to their comfortable beds, they did not know what had become of the only young relative they had in the world. Alfred told himself, but uneasily, that Alice had left a competence. Helena shut her eyes, and wooed sleep in vain to the refrain that it was the girl's own fault. But at two a.m. when she heard a light footstep pass in the silence of Bulow Place, she shivered under her eiderdown and told herself that she was a fool to imagine that it could by any remote possibility be Jean.

When Jean came back with her two old trunks from St. Pancras, they were carried up to the little attics somehow and dumped down on the empty floor. Then she was introduced to Mrs. Spender's own sanctum underground, where Jamie sat on a black-and-red rug before a bright fire and a steaming kettle, with Robin Grey beside him, and Thomas purring loudly in his arms. On

the table was a white cloth, a black teapot, and a pot of jam. Two succulent kippers were in a frying-pan waiting to be cooked.

'There's nothing like a kipper for puttin' 'eart inter yer,' remarked Mrs. Spender. 'I've proved it time and time again when I've been down on my luck; and it's food yer want, dearie. I've only ter look at yer ter see that. Now sit yer down in 'is chair while I fry these. A cup o' 'ot tea and a kipper—put 'eart into a stone it would. And then there's the sofy invitin' yer. Yer'll sleep as sound as if yer was in Buckin'ham Palace.'

Morris Warenne dined that evening in Royal Square. In the library after dinner he went to the piano. His companion sat listening while the young doctor improvised. He ended with the old words of Ben Jonson which he had set to music.

Mr. Pryme sat with his eyes shaded from the fire in the depths of his favourite chair.

'I met that face this evening, Morris,' he said suddenly.

'Which one?' smiled Morris.

'The one that makes simplicity a grace.'

'I thought it was lost in the seventeenth century,' said Morris.

'It isn't; but it is lost in London murk,' was the reply. 'And I want to find it.'

'Maybe I can help you,' said Morris, as he left the piano with a laugh.

## CHAPTER IV.

### The Common Task.

Laugh and be merry; remember, better the world with  
a song,  
Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong.  
Laugh, for the time is brief, a thread the length of  
a span;  
Laugh, and be proud to belong to the old proud  
pageant of man.

*Masefield.*

JEAN awoke next morning as the dusty sunlight of Central London was trying to struggle up Pilgrim Street. For a second she was conscious of a huge weariness. Then she stretched herself luxuriously on the roomy old couch and wondered where she was. There was a sound of scraping not far away, and raising her head she saw Mrs. Spender in her black frock and crocheted collar riddling out the grate. As Jean looked at her she struck a match and a cheery flame leapt up towards the chimney.

Jean sat up and saw that Jamie was as fast and as happily asleep as though he lay in Mrs. Anderson's box bed at Gairlie. The kitchen was still nearly dark; but from the grating above the window came already the strange sounds of passers-by. Jean heard for the first time in her memory the shrill cry of hawkers, the milkman's bell, and the news-

paper boy's raucous shout. The world was so new and so different, that it came to her almost without feeling, and Scotland seemed to have ceased to exist. Only the sight of Jamie blissfully asleep seemed to belong to any world but the queer, cockney kitchen in which she found herself.

Mrs. Spender rose from her knees, and nodded pleasantly at Jean.

'Had a good night, dearie?' she inquired.

'Rather,' said Jean cordially.

'Knowed yer would. Now, dearie, I has ter go across to Brunswick Square, where I obliges a lady wot keeps a boarding-'ouse and is short of her 'ousemaid. I'm parlour-maid there in the ev'nin's too. Waits at dinner I does on the boarders. There's nineteen of 'em. Cautions some of 'em, I can tell yer; but that's not my business. You lie still a bit, and I'll be back in an hour. There's Mr. Magson 'e 'as my first floor, and he's a chemist gent in Conduit Street, doin' well, but wants 'is breakfast at eight sharp. Then there's Miss Robhart as gets her own, and now there's you two for the attics, and on the third floor I mends old clothes in my off-time, and sleeps myself. All in all I've not done bad since Spender was took. We'd never any childer, and 'e drank. He wasn't wot yer might describe as a 'comfortin' 'usband, Spender wasn't, and there's many round 'ere that envies me. Mebbe they are not so far wrong.'

Mrs. Spender laughed heartily, as she

emerged from her back kitchen where a kettle boiled merrily with cups of tea for herself and Jean.

'There's water on the stove,' she said. 'Yer'll want a wash. But tike yer time, for there's plenty.'

She took a black hat with a rakish bow that held a far hint of the fashion from a cupboard under the stairs, and departed. Jean lay still for a few minutes, and looked out towards the day that was dawning for Jamie and herself. It might hold very strange things, and one of them might be disillusion, though Jean was determined not to call it by that name.

'Werena my heart licht, I wad dee,' she sang to herself as she woke Jamie, and gave him a bath in a cracked earthenware bowl that she found on the sink. Three words seemed to ring in her ears as she made her own toilet not without difficulty: 'For other folk—for other folk.' They were the words on the little black-and-white card in the shop. Jean had always taken things for granted in a straightforward fashion in the Highlands. She had gone to the old kirk and sung the Psalms, and listened to long and learned sermons at which her father had often laughed. Suddenly, since she left St. Pancras Station yesterday, Christianity seemed a new and different thing. It was surely, first, last, and always, a desire to do something 'for other folk.'

'Then Mrs. Anderson was a Christian, and



there are some in Pilgrim Street; but——’

Jean stopped short. She remembered the letter that Mrs. Charwood had written to her brother-in-law when he would not send Jean, aged eighteen, to London ‘to be introduced into society like a Christian.’

‘Things are puzzling,’ said the girl to herself, as she scrubbed Jamie’s knees.

‘What are you thinking about, Jean?’ asked her little brother.

‘I’m trying to find out what things mean,’ said Jean.

‘I b’lieve that parcel in the back kitchen means bacon for breakfast. I’m awful hungry,’ said Jamie confidently.

Jean laughed.

‘Perhaps finding something for breakfast is the real thing in life,’ she said. ‘At any rate you seem to find out other things if you have had a good one.’

‘‘Course,’ said Jamie. ‘You can do your lessons better.’

‘Ah!’ agreed Jean. ‘So you can, little philosopher.’

‘You’re funny,’ said Jamie sagely. ‘Here’s Mrs. Spender coming back to cook it. I like Mrs. Spender, Jean.’

‘She’s a jewel,’ agreed Jean.

Mr. Magson’s tray was carried up to the drawing-room floor, while Jean offered to lay the table in the kitchen, and Thomas purred aloud on the hearth as though he entirely agreed with the state of things which he found about him. The numerous clocks of

Central London were striking nine when Jean emerged from the door in Pilgrim Street, holding Jamie fast by the hand. Ruth Robhart was taking down her shutters.

She gave Jean a nod as though she were too busy this morning to remember last night. But Jean and Jamie were accustomed to neither business nor rebuffs, and they stopped to speak to her.

She took up a thin black dress which she was embroidering with gold thread, and returned to her seat near the window.

'I'm very busy,' she said. 'This has to be finished before to-night. It's a job for a woman who gives you sympathy as well as pay, and they are scarce.'

'It looks as though it belonged to a nice woman,' said Jean.

'It does; but one who works as hard as I do. It's the idlers who have no time to spare for other people's feelings.'

'It's beautiful too,' said Jean.

'Humph!' was the reply. 'Maybe it is, though I say it who made it. You only really understand what you make yourself. And what is beauty? It's truth that matters, and cheap things have their uses. Where are you going so soon?'

'I'm going to look for work,' said Jean.

'Heaven help you,' replied Ruth Robhart fervently. 'Not that I want to discourage you either, and seeing that you are looking out for it, perhaps Heaven will help you. I'm sure you won't get any from that smart

conventional doorstep in Bulow Place. What can you do?’

‘I can type,’ said Jean hesitatingly.

‘Humph! What’s your speed?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Poor dear; but you may find out. Shall I keep the kiddie for you until you come back?’

‘I think I had better keep him,’ said Jean, looking at Jamie. ‘To-morrow I must find a school for him.’

‘There’s one round the corner. It’s full of Jews and Italians; and if he goes there, he will soon speak a hotch-potch of cockney and Scotch, but if I were you I shouldn’t mind. There’s some good stuff in that school.’

‘I shan’t mind,’ said Jean. ‘He shall go there. He’s got to learn to be a man. Perhaps he’ll find the beginning there.’

‘I’ll soon be a man,’ put in Jamie. ‘And when I drive the engine, Jean, you shall ride for nothing in the train.’

‘Ah,’ said Jean, kissing him. ‘There is a lot in that, Jamie. And now, Miss Robhart, where shall I begin? What do you do in London when you want work?’

‘You go to the nearest Free Library and stare at advertisement columns among dirty-looking men who smell of drink until sometimes you feel as degraded as they look and more hopeless than they seem to feel. The nearest one to here is at Holborn. Go down Southampton Row, turn to your right when

you get to the top of King-way, make inquiries, and there you are. Look at the *Times* and the *Daily Chronicle*, if you can get near them. If you want more genteel occupations, try the weeklies; but I shouldn't.'

'I'm just awfully grateful to you,' said Jean. 'I'm willing to do anything in the world that will keep Jamie and me on top of our ninety pounds. I'll come back with a job. See if I don't. There must be one somewhere for me. I'm as strong as strong.'

'Poor beggars,' said Ruth aloud, watching them down the street. 'Why didn't they stop in the Highlands? I would like to give that woman in Bulow Place a pretty big slice of my mind. She is the same one who wanted to buy that old lustre jug for a mere song, and who beat me down that it wasn't the real old stuff. As if I didn't know lustre in my sleep. Mercy! I'm thankful I know something. Now, what is to be done with that poor baby when she drags her weary feet home this afternoon; for drag them she will, or my name is not Ruth Elizabeth Robbarts, and not a bad name either. London's an awful place for such. It's the dearest or the weariest place in the world.'

Jean found the Holborn Free Library, and turned the pages of the great dailies until her head swam and her mind was bewildered. Half the vacant places advertised for things of which she had never heard. Presently she scribbled two or three addresses on a paper, boarded a 'bus after a few mistakes

and breathless questions, and found herself crossing the Thames on the way to a great newspaper office, where people were required to address envelopes. Here she and Jamie waited for a long time before they were admitted to the office of a tall, handsome woman who listened humorously to Jean's request for work, and got rid of her in some dexterous fashion which left the girl gasping on the wrong side of the door. The next objective was not far away. It was a magnificent suite of offices where little schoolgirls in nigger-brown uniforms stood in rows at the top of a lift to conduct callers along marble halls. Jamie thought it was fairyland and that they were brownies. But here too it was strict efficiency and stricter training that was required, and Jean found herself smilingly and courteously bowed away.

'We'll try this place,' said the girl, as they walked back towards the West along the Strand, two small units in a stupendous whole that went on its surging noisy way. She looked at her paper.

'The Ideal Employment Bureau. That's a place where they find work for you when you tell them what you can do. Here's a bus, Jamie. We'll go on the top, and then you can see the sights of London.'

More than one person glanced at the brown-eyed girl in countrified black, who was beginning to look anxious, and the little laddie in his kilt, as they clambered to the top of the rolling motor-bus which seemed to them

a caravan both romantic and terrible, as it got under weigh with its freight of people. Jean clung to the side, and clutched Jamie as he hung over, delighted, into space. He shouted with rapture when Nelson's Column came into view. He pointed and gesticulated, and generally enjoyed himself until a broad smile appeared on the face of every jaded Londoner who happened to be going west on that particular 'bus.

'You've done us good, kiddie,' said a pale-faced ex-soldier with a limp as Jamie handed him his stick and watched him down the staircase.

Jean looked up in amazement, and caught sight of every smiling face, as she in her turn engineered Jamie down to the pavement. Her heart had begun to sink, but the smiles lifted it again. It was cheering to think that Londoners could smile when they were so terribly efficient and self-sufficient. Jean crossed the road somewhere not far from Oxford Circus, and the spring of the hills was back in her feet.

She consulted a policeman and her paper, and then stopped before a large window with 'Aerated Bread Company' printed on it in gilt letters and huge stacks of buns inside.

'I'm going to leave you here, Jamie,' she said, 'with a cup of cocoa and two buns, and you are not to stir from the place until I come back—no, not if I am hours and hours away. But I shan't be.'

'But, Jean,' began Jamie.



'No, Jamie,' said Jean resolutely. 'If you don't do as you are told, I shall—send you to boarding school.'

This threat was the worst that Jamie ever heard, and it had lost its horror long ago. In London, however, were so many things that he had never dreamed of, and boarding schools might materialize.

'I won't move, Jean, and I didn't bring Robin Gray,' he said. 'You know I left the bags with the gentleman last night.'

'You did,' said Jean severely.

She marched him into the shop, ordered the biggest buns to be had for the money, set Jamie down before a marble-topped table with a picture paper, and, feeling distinctly anxious, left the shop.

The 'Ideal Employment Bureau' was just round the corner. Jean's limbs trembled as she walked into a shop underneath it, and was told to walk upstairs and ring the bell. Three doors confronted her, and the middle one was inscribed with the name she wanted. She rang the electric bell and waited.

The door slowly opened. A young, languid fair-haired girl with pale-blue eyes and much-tortured hair glanced out. Her dress was an attempt at the last word in fashion, her skirts were nearly up to her knees, and she looked at Jean with a disdainful patronage which she thought she had copied from Bond Street. It seemed almost too much trouble to speak in a whisper, when Jean inquired for Miss Stanway, the secretary.

'Have you an appointment?' asked the anaemic-looking girl, throwing back her head with an air of utter weariness.

'No; I didn't know——' began Jean.

The Ideal Bureau's secretary waved her on to a chair in the corner of the room.

'Perhaps I can persuade her to see you; what name?' she asked languidly, and then disappeared.

Jean sank into a chair and sighed. Her heart was beating like a big hammer, and she wished she had joined Jamie at the buns before this ordeal.

'She can't eat me,' Jean reassured herself. 'And we've somewhere to go for the night. But I wish I knew something properly. They all seem so cross with me for coming when I don't.'

The fair-haired girl was back again, apparently finding it a super-effort to open the door.

'This way, Miss Grame,' she whispered, ushering Jean across the passage into a severe-looking office where a big woman sat at a desk.

'More efficient than ever,' said Jean to herself, as she took the leather-covered chair which was pointed out to her.

'You want work,' said the woman, looking at her with eyes like gimlets.

'Yes,' faltered Jean. 'I can type, and——'

'What speed?'

'I don't know,' said Jean reluctantly. 'I typed for my father.'

'What was your father?'

'A scientific man. He—er—invented things, and sometimes wrote.'

The woman shrugged her shoulders.

'No office experience, of course?'

'None!'

'A great mistake.'

'I couldn't help that,' said Jean, her dignity beginning to appear and her trembling to cease. She rose to her feet. 'I won't take up your time,' she said. 'I—I am afraid I can't get work in London.'

'Not unless it's domestic. I could find you that. Can you cook?'

'Yes,' said Jean. 'If it is plain, but I have a little brother to keep.'

'Better get him into a home. I am afraid I can do nothing for you unless you undergo a course of strict training. You are young enough for that. Good-morning.'

'Good morning,' said Jean, and stumbled down the staircase and out into the mellow sunshine, her eyes blinded with tears until she could not see. The heart had gone out of her. Her hope had fled, not because London was big and lonely and rushing, and Scotland far away, and she and Jamie were alone in the world, and Aunt Helena would have nothing to do with either unless they separated. Fear, not to say panic, seized Jean, because other people were so efficient.

She wandered on slowly, forgetting Jamie in the A.B.C., and turned into a spacious square that has come down in the world and given itself to business. She stopped

without knowing what she was doing before the window of a fine old house. It was full of papers and chintzes of beautiful pattern, but Jean did not see them. She stood still, apparently staring into the shop window, but in reality striving with agony to overcome a burst of passionate, disappointed tears. Two or three rolled down her cheek: but she struggled and choked them down, and presently a roll of blue cretonne caught her eye, and arrested it. The colour was a deep real blue, the blue of the sky at night, when the stars first show and the lamps are lighted below. There was something in the colour that stole into Jean's very heart, and told her that the world was full of beauty as well as of rebuff. She looked further at the chintz; and saw a quaint lovely pattern stamped upon the blue. She glanced at the name on the old house, and her eyes lighted while her new troubles fled. It was the place where Morris's colours and designs were sold. Her father's stories of that great artist who gave his whole life to making the common world beautiful came back to her. She saw herself a schoolgirl on the moors with her eyes on the distant islands, while her father talked and worked to no apparent purpose in the primitive laboratory that he had fixed up in an outhouse at Gairlie. She thought of Ruth Robhart, who she was certain was brave and struggling.

'Jamie and I are not destitute. Something will turn up,' she said to herself, and boldly

walked into the old house and up the staircase to a showroom on the first floor.

It was a pleasant place, with a beautiful ancient chimney-piece and a wide window that looked into a garden. A fig-tree climbed the wall and framed the window, and Jean stepped to it and looked out. There were stout little figs on the tree in spite of the climate of London. The girl turned round to the assistant who waited with a half-smile on his face, and wondered why her eyes were so full of light. He was not accustomed to quite that look among his customers.

Jean bought a length of the chintz, ignoring its price, for she was determined to have it in her attic to remind her that beauty and courage were in the world. She walked out clasping the parcel closely, and made her way quickly to the A.B.C. where she had left Jamie. She looked in anxiously through the glass door. The little boy sat where she had left him. The buns had disappeared, but on the marble table before Jamie plates of inviting and indigestible cakes were spread. He was munching one with undiminished appetite. To Jean's amazement, he was not alone.

## CHAPTER V.

### Confidences and Conferences.

A silent man in life's affairs,  
A thinker from a boy,  
A peasant in his daily cares,  
A poet in his joy.

*John Clare.*

THERE was a church near Oxford Circus, into which Richard Pryme often slipped between two engagements. It was beautiful, it was always open, and filled with the atmosphere of sun and hope. Therefore it helped him both to think and pray.

Just round the corner from this church, a homely A.B.C. was well known to Mr. Pryme, and he to it; for he had brought many a strange companion there. On the autumn morning when Jean set out with Jamie to look for work, Richard Pryme had slipped in for a cup of coffee and two sandwiches. He was sitting with those delicacies before him, when Jamie Grame was set down by a severe sister to a small empty table, and left there with a bumper of cocoa to console him.

Jamie looked solemnly at the cocoa, and wished that he had brought Robin Gray. Jamie had no use for life without its sociabi-



lities. Then he raised his head over his cup with a half-bitten bun in his hand and met the eyes of Mr. Richard Pryme. The child had yet to be born who did not smile at the grey-haired poet, whether it was at his fairy tales, his magic plays, or at himself. Jamie smiled now, and so did Richard. Then the old man removed himself and his sandwiches from his own lonely table, and took a seat opposite to Jamie.

‘You haven’t run off with the knickerbockers of any more London urchins, have you, my Scots laddie?’ inquired Mr. Pryme with a chuckle. ‘You look like business this morning.’

‘Yes,’ acknowledged Jamie. ‘An’ Jean said perhaps it was his only pair; but I don’t know where he lives, so I couldn’t give him mine. ‘Sides, I haven’t any, only kilts; but Jean says maybe I’ll have to have some to go to a London school in.’

‘Quite unnecessary; that plaid would brighten up any schoolroom,’ said Mr. Pryme.

‘Do you think so?’ said Jamie anxiously. ‘Jean wasn’t sure; but—I—I couldn’t let that boy have Robin Gray, you know. He’s my oldest friend. He wouldn’t be happy with anybody else but me, Robin wouldn’t. You can’t let a friend be run off with by a boy who makes your mouth bleed, can you?—not an old friend like Robin Gray?’

‘Nobody would who understands what a real friend means,’ replied Mr. Pryme seriously. ‘And you evidently do. Friends are jolly

things, aren't they? Did you find yours yesterday? And did Aunt Helena give you a good tea?' c

'Aunt Helena was cross, I 'spose,' said Jamie thoughtfully. 'I didn't see her; but there's lots of friends in London. We went off with the rattle-taggle gypsies instead of going back to the house with the doorstep and the shiny knocker. A lady what has a shop full of bee-utyful cups and jugs and teapots and things, and it says "Manage with bread-and-butter till God sends the jam," gave me muffins for tea, and there was jam; so I 'spose the time had come for God to send it.'

'Evidently,' agreed Mr. Pryme with great interest.

'And Jean said we were pilgrims, so it was Pilgrim Street,' went on Jamie. 'Like a game you know, and I slept in her husband's chair before the fire, and Jean on the couch, and we had kippers, an' they was awful good. And there was jam there too! Wasn't it funny and nice?'

'Funny things are generally nice, and nice things funny,' said Richard Pryme thoughtfully. 'And we are all good neighbours in that part of London, and very jolly together. It's a sociable part, and introductions to the right people don't worry us. I hope you will pay me a visit over my doorstep in Royal Square. You know the one—and meanwhile I'm hungry this morning, and any average boy can eat more than two cakes. What do you say to those sugared and creamy-

looking things over there? Do you think a selection of them would give you a pain?’

‘I shouldn’t mind if they did,’ said Jamie gravely. ‘But I don’t often have one. I should like to come and see you,’ added the little boy. ‘Are you any relation to Peter Pan? Jean said we should see him in London, and somehow—you seem a bit like him.’

Jamie leaned forward and peered into Mr. Pryme’s eyes across the little table. They were very delighted eyes at that moment, as the old lover of fairy tales and madrigals and minuets and any other delightful and whimsical thing beckoned to the little waitress who knew most about his kindnesses, and ordered cream cakes and coloured icing. Then he looked confidentially across at his little companion.

‘Do you know,’ he said, ‘I think I would rather be taken for a relation of Peter Pan than for anybody else in the world. We are a sort of cousins.’

‘I thought you must be,’ nodded Jamie accepting a squashy cake and drinking a deep draught of sweet cocoa. ‘London’s full of s’prises, and we only came last night. You do enjoy yourself, don’t you, when a place is full of s’prises? Up at Gairlie, where we lived, we didn’t know that there was any cakes like these in the whole world. But I s’pose there wouldn’t be if you wasn’t Peter Pan’s cousin. They’re magic cakes of course.’

‘Of course. Where did you say your home was up in the Highlands?’

'At—Oh, here's Jean. Jean! Jean! Here I am, Jean. I haven't moved, not one single inch; I haven't stood up even. And this is Peter Pan's cousin. He's awful nice, he's a surprise, like the rest of it, and he can get magic cakes. They are good. Can Jean have one, Peter Pan's cousin?'

Long before Jamie reached his climax Jean was standing beside the little table, listening and looking with something like dismay. Richard Pryme had looked up as she entered the shop, opening the door decidedly, her little parcel of chintz in her hand. He saw the shadow that still lingered across her clear young brow. It was a shadow which the old poet never liked to see on a young face, but which he did see somewhere on most days in London. But this time underneath Jean's brow he saw that her eyes were both brave and serene, as though she had found strength somewhere. Instantly the little song which Morris had sung to him with its old grace of words came into his memory.

**Give me the look, give me the face,  
That makes simplicity a grace.**

'Such a look is in that bonnie face,' said Richard to himself. 'And that is the girl for Morris,' he added suddenly and unexpectedly in his own heart, as though some infallible inspiration had reached it.

He rose from his seat before the pile of youthful-looking confectionery as Jean approached. Something unmistakable to the lassie from the Highlands shone in his own

eyes and drove suspicion for ever from hers. It was true that London was full of surprises. And if some of them were cold and cruel, it seemed as though the next had a strange way of being kind. Then one forgot the others.

‘For the second time in twenty-four hours I must apologize for turning up and joining forces with your little brother,’ said Richard. ‘This happens to be a haunt of mine, and I saw you bring him in; so we have been eating our buns together. I do hope you will forgive me. Jamie tells me that you came to harbour in Pilgrim Street last night, and in Pilgrim Street they are all neighbours and friends of mine. You see I live in that funny old cul-de-sac that swells out of Pilgrim Street, and any of them will tell you that I am a respectable old man who just can’t help making friends. No doubt it’s a suspicious kind of crank at times; but it has brought me so many pleasant experiences that I simply can’t either repent or reform. If we are to be neighbours, I do hope you will let me know Jamie.’

Jean smiled, and it was a smile worth rousing. It nearly dazzled old Richard, whose admiration was as honest and transparent as a rainbow before a hillside. He foraged in his pockets, and after producing a shabby purse, a fat notebook, a sheaf of coloured pictures for his new book, and the model of a little elf, which an aspiring young artist had sent him that morning, he found his

card-case, and presented Jean with his credentials.

She glanced at the card, but in the wilds of Gairlie popular names were unknown. She looked rather at the man's face, and all Mrs. Anderson's warning maxims rolled off her mind and left it clear for its own honest impressions.

'You have been very kind to Jamie, Mr. Pryme,' said Jean simply. 'Yesterday I didn't think London was a very kind place, but—it is.'

'De Quincey called it a cruel stepmother,' said Richard. 'But to those who have found it, London has the kindest heart in the world. Like its own quaint corners, its heart is hidden behind the traffic, and that makes a good deal of noise. You have to listen as well as look for hearts, and not talk too much yourself.'

'Ah!' Tears suddenly started to Jean's eyes, and the old man saw them. 'I was brought up in the Highlands,' she said softly. 'There was space and time for listening there.'

'There would be,' Mr. Pryme nodded. 'But so there is in Bloomsbury, though maybe not in Mayfair. You will find both, lassie. My own mother was a Scotswoman, and I ken the western islands mair from her talk than my ain journeys.'

Jean laughed at the scrap of Scotch, and Mr. Pryme shook hands with the girl, gave Jamie a pat on the head, and went away.



'Yon's an honest man, Jean,' remarked the little boy as his new friend went out of the glass door.

'I think so,' agreed Jean, as she cheerfully ordered two sandwiches for herself, and enjoyed them with a young country appetite.

London might be a place where rich and cold-hearted aunts turned you down. Obviously it was also a city where things of an unexpected nature turned up, and one never knew, even after the first twenty-four hours, what would come next.

Richard Pryme walked absently down Oxford Street, and as absently entered the Tube at the Circus, and took a ticket for the British Museum.

'That is the maid for Morris,' he said to himself. 'And I am not ashamed to turn matchmaker in my old age. That's a fine little lad,' concluded Mr. Pryme as he stepped across Hart Street, and turned towards Russell Square, unconsciously returning Jamie's compliment to himself.

It was four o'clock when Jean and Jamie got back to Pilgrim Street. They had walked all the way with the help of a penny map and several inquiries, and their feet were tired, though their hearts were still high. Jean had dropped in at a stationer's shop, where a 'young lady assistant' was apparently required, judging from a statement on a smutty envelope in the window. She had met with no luck, for the substantial

proprietor in shirt sleeves did not seem quite to take in that she wanted the job for herself. In a smart little sweet-shop she was told that 'their young ladies must be brought up to the sweets or the fancy.' As Jean turned into Pilgrim Street and walked in the shadow between its high houses, she was wondering what she could do with Jamie if she went out as a nursery governess. 'Or what we called at home a servant lass,' she said to herself. 'I want work, not high-falatin' names for it. I won't—I won't let Jamie go into an orphanage.'

She looked down at the rough tow head and the bare kilted legs of her Highland laddie, who was beginning to drag along the hard pavement. They brought up suddenly at No. 8. A beam of afternoon sunlight was falling across Ruth Robhart's little shop, and it seemed to wake to answering life every bit of flame colour and blue among the pots and jugs and teapots and squat and tall jars of the cosy little place. Ruth was spreading a hand-made rug before a dour-looking customer, who was counting the cost with primmed lips. The shopwoman was eager with flushed face, and as persuasive a tongue as Ruth Robhart could ever attain. As Jean opened the door of Mrs. Spender's house, the customer emerged, and Ruth stood at the door watching her.

'There!' she said. 'She'd have bought that rug yesterday. But a friend has persuaded her that it wouldn't match her room.'

It's a lovely thing, and I'm selling it for a poor ex-service man who lives in the top attics opposite. Come in here a minute, Miss Grame. I've been round to that second-hand shop in Conduit Street. Things are going down fast. There's a painted chest of drawers—you'll need drawers, and you and I can paint 'em black, and maybe put a bit of an orange cloth on them, with a big jug I'll let you have, for it's cracked, so it's no use to me. But filled with honesty it would look fine. There's a round table too, and a couch where Jamie could sleep. With two basket chairs we'll fix you up like princes, and you'll be as right as rain. And Mrs. Spender said that if I saw you come in tea would be waiting downstairs for you both at four. Jamie can have a second one with me when I shut up shop if he likes. And Robin Gray has spent a pleasant afternoon.'

Ruth handed out the shabby old horse from a corner, and Jean promised eagerly to go round to Conduit Street immediately after tea. Down in the basement kitchen it was almost dusk. The fire was a glowing red, Thomas was purring his loudest, and Mrs. Spender was making buttered toast, sitting on a three-legged stool. She turned round with a smile as Jean and Jamie entered. Her experienced eye saw in an instant that the quest had failed.

'Sit yer down, miss,' she said, rising, and pointing with the toasting-fork to the old armchair. 'No luck?' she said cheerily, in

answer to Jean's quickly-told tale. 'Lor' bless yer, I never thought yer would 'ave. They talks about work-shy folks; but to my way o' thinkin' it's the work that's shy. I've lived among pretty busy men and women all my life, and there isn't nearly so many wasters nor lazybones as the papers'd make yer think. Them there editors may know their names and addresses; but if ye're idle in this 'ere part o' London, why, ye're 'ungry, and that ain't a very satisfyin' feelin' on a cold dry day. No doubt it's different up West; but, then, things is looked at different up that way too. But what of it? See 'em lolling by in the Park. They're not 'appy. And now somebody says as our Dr. Warenne has been and gone and got a fortin' left 'im. I 'ope it won't go for to spoil 'is 'earty laugh and the pleasant way he has with poor sick folks whether their bills is paid or not. He's a 'appy man the doctor is. It's bad news I says, when Mr. Magson told me. "So 'e seems ter think," Mr. Magson replied. The doctor 'as sense, I answered.

'Now, lovey,' went on Mrs. Spender, turning to Jamie, 'come and have some toast and jam. Put down that there wooden 'orse as seems like a Christian to yer. He'll sit good by Thomas while we 'ave our teas. It's nice to have company,' concluded Mrs. Spender, nodding Jean to a seat with the tact of the well-bred hostess, whatever her station in life.

'You will add these meals to your first month's bill, won't you, please, Mrs. Spender,'

said Jean before she sat down. 'I am not without ready money, you know. I am not a fraud. I am anxious to pay in advance.'

'Time enough, time enough,' said Mrs. Spender pleasantly. 'I ain't 'ad a body drop into their tea since Spender was took, and I'm a bit sick 'o solitude. Miss Robhart, she isn't one ter be friendly. She's took amazin' to you two, I can see that; but she's a lidy o' few words. Story in her life I should say, an' I'm a great woman for a tale, whether it's in one o' them twopenny weeklies as is such nice company of a wet Sunday, or 'eard from the 'uman lips. But I shall never 'ear 'ers.'

Mrs. Spender looked regretfully into the teapot, and Jean felt that confidences were invited. She was conscious of no secret in her own homely Highland history, and she smiled, and then sighed.

'I think a straightforward life is the happiest,' she said.

'But it ain't got no adventures,' put in Mrs. Spender eagerly, for she possessed that incurable feature, a romantic soul. 'I've no use for a body as never made a bit of a fool of hisself. He's never made nothing else to my way o' thinkin'. Sense comes often enough by way of a bit o' foolishness, and lastin' sense too. The worst of it is as we can all see when we was fools in the past. The job is to see what a fool ye can be while it's on. Yer notice that in folks when they are in love, bless 'em!'

Jean laughed, and found Mrs. Spender's philosophy refreshing.

'I'm not in love, except with life and Jamie,' she said rather wistfully. 'And life has given me rather a nasty knock just now, though, thanks to you and Miss Robbart, I'm not feeling it much at this moment. Am I a fool to think I can get work, Mrs. Spender? You tell me that, will you? In case I can't see it for myself, you know.'

Mrs. Spender put down her third cup of strong tea, and looked thoughtfully from Jamie, who had retired to the hearthrag and Robin Gray, to Jean.

'Are yer in earnest?' she asked suddenly.

'Rather—deadly earnest. I must be, and I want to be,' said Jean.

'Then if I was you,' said Mrs. Spender impressively, 'when yer go up to Conduit Street arter yer tea I should step into Mr. Magson's. Chemist at the corner, a bit old-fashioned-lookin', with three big coloured bottles for all he calls hisself a minyiture Boots, Limited. Ha! Ha! Ha! He 'as ambitions, Mr. Magson 'as; but he's a good feller, and I ought ter know, seein' as 'ow he's lodged on my first floor ever since he come to Bloomsbury. He was a-tellin' me only yesterday, when I took him up a nice bit o' pickled mackerel for supper, as he wanted ter branch out inter fancies. Bits o' bags, yer know, and note piper, and pretty little rubbitchy trilles as takes folks' fancy at Christmas time.'

'But where can I get a reliable young



lidy, Mrs. Spender?" says he. "I want none o' yer silly 'ead in the air, 'igh-'eeled flappers as spends all their time at the mirror," says 'e. "And yet," he says, "I don't want a dowdy young 'oman neither, as will put customers off their notions."

"Yer wants what isn't mide, Mr. Magson," I says. "A freshly-'atched angel is what you are askin' for, and it can't be done, sir," I says. "Not since the war, at any rate. Yer'd think the world was mide for them contemptuous misses as fills up 'Olborn at mid-day."

"You find me what I want, Mrs. Spender," he says with a smile. That was meant for one of his jokes, o' course; but, bless my soul! I believe you're the gal for 'im.'

Jean half rose from her seat.

'I can type,' she said. 'But I've never kept shop.'

'You go and see him,' nodded Mrs. Spender. 'I've knowed him for many years, and he's a reliable chap, though a bit foolish in his notions. The colours o' them three big bottles has got into his h'eyes. S'y I sent yer. I'll mind the kiddie.'

Jean looked at Jamie sprawling on the black-and-red rug between Thomas and Robin Gray. She put on her hat and ran up the steep staircase with light feet, for hope had put wings on to them again. With a word to Ruth, she was out in the long grey street, round the corner, and in the little thoroughfare between two great highways known as Conduit Street.

It was one of those narrow streets, left behind by the march of progress in London, which look sordid at the first glance, but come to be lined with romance to those who know them well. Here is an old door, there a quaint roof or window. This tallow-chandler has a panelled parlour. That old bowed shop might stand in a country market-place. The eighteenth century and some of its famous figures knew Conduit Street. Their atmosphere lingered still to mingle with the human nature that had always made the street a story-book.

Something of this touched Jean as she ran round the corner. She looked up at the red lamp above the doctor's door. As she did so Morris Warrenne came out with a poor woman and helped her to lift a crippled child into a clumsy perambulator.

'We'll get you a better one,' he said as Jean passed.

Something in his voice made her look up suddenly; but she did not see his face, nor he hers, and she went on. The secondhand furniture-shop was a dingy place with one dirty gas-globe alight; but to Jean, shod with hope, it was a palace of treasure. It looked like a marine store to the outside world. Jean was initiate, and saw Aladdin's lamp in the dirty globe.

The old couch stood firm and four square on its legs, and so did the round table, only its legs were three. The young Jew who dealt in these antiques looked at Jean ad-

miringly, and promised that they should be wheeled round to Pilgrim Street on a hand-cart as soon as seven struck and his place of business was shut. The bargain had been struck by Ruth Robhart, a fellow shopkeeper who knew the ropes in Conduit Street. A surprisingly small number of pound notes changed hands, and Jean went out into the September dusk treading the dingy pavement as though it were air. There was even a thread of gold in the cracks about the paving-stones.

She paused for a moment at the corner where Mr. Magson's shop was throwing out a splendid blaze from electric light and coloured glass. Jean looked in at the open door, and saw a cheerful spot, as neat and well arranged as the dapper sandy-haired man who was making up a little packet and listening with flattering interest to a recital of somebody's 'old man's' complaints. He prescribed for them with an assurance that would have given confidence to a hypochondriac. His customer went away smiling, and Jean stepped hesitatingly over the threshold. Mr. Magson bowed across the counter with what he considered his very best manner, and placed his well-kept fingers on the polished surface.

'What can I do for you, madam?' he inquired, but somehow in not quite such a confident voice as was his wont. Henry Magson considered himself inviolate, unimpressible, and entirely philosophic in his attitude towards women. He prided himself upon it. He told Mrs. Spender that time

was on his side, that his little business was his wife and his child, and that she made him far too comfortable for any other woman to storm his heart. But that was before Jean Grame stepped lightly in at his shop door on a September evening and looked at him out of two appealing, brave brown eyes that were like clear shining after rain. They seemed to fill his shop with a thousand lights that never shone on land or sea.

'I think you are Mr. Magson,' said Jean in a direct manner, though she felt timid after her morning's experiences. Somehow, however, this part of London was different.

'At your service, madam.' Henry Magson was not quite sure what he said. He felt quite unusually turned upside down, and could not understand himself.

'Mrs. Spender has sent me,' said Jean humbly. 'I am a stranger in London, and I am looking for some work. I believe you require—a—a sort of secretary. I know how to type. I helped my father, who is dead. I am accustomed to scientific formula. He was—a—sort of chemist. He wrote things and invented them.'

It sounded very inadequate to Jean, and her voice faltered. Henry Magson waved her to a chair. His own capacity for business was large, though his opportunities had been small. Still, he had never lagged behind them, and he told himself now that he knew a good thing when he saw it, that his eye was almost infallible, and that here was no

impertinent flapper who would turn him out of his own windows. Yet it was not his infallible eye that brought him round to the front of the counter, rubbing his hands and looking very urbane. It was a strange tug at his feelings in the region of his heart.

'I am indebted to Mrs. Spender,' said Henry, with a second bow. 'I have ever considered her a woman of sound sense and judgement. It is certainly true that I am looking out for a young lady to help me in extending my little emporium here. Between ourselves I see no reason why Magson's should not become the "Boots" of this part of town. I may tell you in confidence, Miss—er—'

'Grame,' put in Jean.

'Miss Grame,' repeated the chemist. 'That I have purchased the next shop, and it becomes mine next week. There——' he waved his hand towards the right. 'I intend to open shortly with a fancy and stationery department in which the help of a lady like yourself would be invaluable. Likewise, I am in need of somebody to type my business letters and keep a few accounts. The experience you mention sounds as though it would suit my book. After a little further conversation, we may possibly be able to come to terms.'

A small boy entered to buy a mustard-plaster. When he departed, Jean rose to her feet.

'I am not very quick,' she said. 'But if you will give me a trial, Mr. Magson, I will do my best. I can give you references, if you

will accept them from my Highland home. I have an aunt in London; but she—she is not prepared to be—friendly. I did not expect to have to look for work quite so soon. I may not be able to satisfy you with my credentials. My father was not unknown to certain journals, but——’

‘Miss Grame,’ said Henry Magson, ‘I am a man of quick decisions when I know my own mind. My mother was a very intelligent woman, and I flatter myself that she taught me to read character. If it is of any satisfaction to you, I shall be pleased to know the address of your parish minister up north, and just to satisfy you, my dear young lady, not myself, for I am satisfied, I will drop him a line. But let us consider it settled if you are prepared to accept a salary of two pounds a week. I had fixed the job at that sum in my own mind.’

He had; but that was the maximum to which his assistant might climb with patient efficiency. Here he was, offering this magnificent sum to a stranger, because her eyes suddenly shone upon him with a new light. Was he a consummate ass or a very wise man? Henry Magson could not say, because he was at a loss to analyse the tumult in his breast which was more complex than any undecipherable prescription. The little man was fond of grandiloquent phrases, and liked to talk about rich folk. His use of the letter *h* was uncertain, and that of the cockney was his tongue. But he had the heart of a gentle-



man when he turned to his shining bottles and left Jean to make up her mind.

It needed no making up. She had a vision of wealth and peace of mind and comfort in Pilgrim Street that might have astonished the Rockefellers of this world as much as it did herself.

'I—I certainly accept your offer, Mr. Magson,' she said gratefully, and did not try to hide it. 'I hope I shall satisfy you. When—when do you want me to come?'

'Next Monday week at nine a.m.,' said Henry promptly. 'And what is your address, Miss Grame?'

'My little brother and I are going to have Mrs. Spender's top floor,' said Jean simply.

'Good!' was the reply. 'I have always liked to keep things in the family, so to speak. And you will be near your work.'

When Jean got back to Mrs. Spender's, the chest of drawers was just going up. She had bought a gay little lamp in Conduit Street to celebrate her success. There was a fire on the attic hearth.

## CHAPTER VI.

### **Little Bombs in Bloomsbury.**

The world is hot and cruel,  
We are weary of heart and hand;  
But the world is more full of glory  
Than you can understand.

*G. K. Chesterton.*

MRS. CHARWOOD was perturbed. It was Friday morning; and though priding herself on never being superstitious, she objected uncomfortably to disagreeable things happening on a Friday. Such incidents, however small, seemed apt to lead to further events. Aunt Helena Charwood hated events. She considered that she had already been made uncomfortable by more than her share.

On this particular Friday at the end of September her parlourmaid, Thompson, chose to give notice immediately after Mr. Charwood had departed to an important case at the Law Courts. His wife was settled at her desk with her correspondence, when the smart young maid came to upset her feelings. It did not mend matters when Thompson informed her that she was tired of Bloomsbury smuts, and meant to try the fashionable air of an exclusive little street off Park Lane. Mrs. Charwood dubbed it insufferable impertinence, but was obliged to put on her outdoor garments and go in search of a registry office. Possible parlour-maids were rare birds,

and to be without one for even twenty-four hours unthinkable. She and Alfred were not of an age to be put out—though Alfred had said some very curious and unusual things in connexion with that little affair of poor Alice's girl coming up to town.

Mrs. Charwood thrust that matter out of her mind as she chose a dark walking-dress and turned out of Bulow Place. She recognized that it was useless to consult a West End agency, and this made her feel annoyed with Alfred, who would live in Central London. She had had a row with her usual office when she engaged an incapable cook a month ago. So she scarcely knew where to turn as she walked along Southampton Row.

Had not somebody told her about a successful office in Chancery Lane? And which was the exactly right way to that benighted spot? Mrs. Charwood prided herself on her ignorance of her immediate neighbourhood. She turned towards Holborn and inquired the way, misunderstood the direction, realized that she had forgotten her lorgnette, and turned hurriedly into Staple Inn rather bewildered in mind and glad to get out of the traffic.

'There must be a short cut,' said Mrs. Charwood aloud, looking beyond the old plane-tree with its yellow leaves and the tall houses, but seeing nothing except her own annoyance.

She turned to find a way out, and stepped suddenly into a passage beside a railed-off garden that had a hint of Italy in the middle

of London. A fountain rose from a low stone basin under the shadow of an old building and a quaint clock that had told the hours of other centuries. Goldfish skimmed the shallow water. A few pink snapdragons and bronze chrysanthemums made a spot of colour and shelter for London sparrows. Busy people passed to and fro along the flagged passage, and perhaps only a few of them glanced at the garden. It was there for those to see who looked.

As she walked on with short, irritated steps, Mrs. Charwood suddenly became conscious that in a three-cornered space of the flagged alley a very intent, small person was busy on the pavement. He could scarcely be described as an artist as he sat tailor-wise in his corner, bent double over the slow, laborious writing that was growing under his chubby brown hand. The queer little figure arrested even Mrs. Charwood, for it was raising a smile from most passers-by. Jean's aunt was not curious, her horizon was too limited for that, but she was inquisitive. She stopped short and looked over the shoulder of the bare-kneed, tow-headed urchin, whose kilt was spread out round him on the ground, and who was filling in his uneven letters with coloured chalk.

Friday Christ died upon the tree  
For other folk as well as me.

Jamie was copying from the little card in his hand, with a wonderfully good attempt to reproduce its quaint lettering. Jean had

gone to a typing-school that morning to make a feverish effort to get up her speed in a week's intensive instruction. Mrs. Spender was charing in Brunswick Square, and the spirit of the wanderer came upon Jamie. He was suddenly cribbed, cabined, and confined in Pilgrim Street, and longed for the isles of the Western Sea. The day before he had spent an absorbed hour watching a pavement artist through the park railings while Jean sewed.

'I 'spect he was a raggle-taggle gypsy hisself,' said the little boy. 'Hoots! I'll be one o' my ain. Maybe I'll earn a penny or twa like him.'

With the echo of all the Andersons in his tones, Jamie strode off in the sunshine feeling himself to be a free man. He had the eyes of the explorer who lives to know far countries, and he could never abide long in one place. He seemed to find his way by instinct in town or country, and fear was unknown to him. He slipped along by-streets, and crossed Holborn as if by a miracle. When he reached the little corner in Staple Inn, he felt at home at once, and a robin was singing there.

Robin Gray looked on, and Mrs. Charwood started she knew not why, when her eyes fell on the old horse.

'What are you doing, little boy?' she said severely. 'Don't you know that you are obstructing traffic? It is very naughty to write on the pavements.'

'Hoots, my leddy, the newspaper laddies

do it,' remarked Jamie, looking up with a smile in his blue eyes which would have disarmed any officer of the law in London. 'I'm awa' with the raggle-taggle gypsies, and I thought I would make a bonnie bit o' picture-writing if I could; but I do not write well. I'm going to the school next week if my breeks are ready.'

He laughed, but no smile turned the corners of Mrs. Charwood's lips.

'It is very wrong to write things out of the Bible on the pavement,' she went on. 'The Bible has nothing to do with streets like this. Its place is in church, not where people walk about their business. You must rub out what you have written and go home. What is your name? Does your mother know what you are doing?'

Jamie looked very solemnly at the words on the pavement.

Friday Christ died upon the tree  
For other folk as well as me.

He read them aloud seriously, and then looked from them to the formidable fashionable woman who loomed above him.

'Other folk are in the street,' he said slowly. 'Doesn't it mean them? Only if they are at church? But that's on Sunday, and this says Friday. Things are puzzlinger when you think about them, aren't they? I must ask Jean.'

'Who is Jean?' demanded Mrs. Charwood shortly.

Jamie looked serious again. In all his short life nobody had ever asked him who Jean





'I THOUGHT EVERYBODY KNEW JEAN.'



was. Everybody had always known. It had not occurred to him to ask himself such a question. A world without Jean in it could not exist for Jamie Grame - there simply could not be such a thing. A faint quail of anxiety followed by a radiant smile crossed his face as he scrambled to his feet and stood with his bare scratched knees far apart looking up at his questioner.

'Jean?' he said. 'Why, Jean is—why, she's Jean, of course. I thought everybody knew Jean. Don't you know her? There's only her, I 'spect, who is Jean, isn't there?'

A questioning that had never attacked Jamie before surged over him. A breath of disillusion crept into the autumn sunshine and dimmed the goldfish in the little pond. He stared down at the words he had written on the pavement, and suddenly felt small and alone in strange streets. He was too stout-hearted and had known too much gladness to feel afraid at this point.

'Egotistical little idiot,' said Mrs. Charwood, as she turned and hurried away, annoyed with herself for lingering over anything so foolish. 'The child is half witted,' she murmured, as she found a turning that led into Chancery Lane.

Her business there was not satisfactory, and Aunt Helena was still more out of temper when she emerged and made her way towards Lincoln's Inn, where her husband's chambers were. She saw no scarlet flag of lovely leaves lying across the grass, no gold in

the plane-trees, nor in the mellow dusty atmosphere. Her husband's clerk told her that Mr. Charwood was in the Law Courts, that the big case in which he was engaged was drawing to a conclusion, and that the verdict was obviously going against his client.

Matters were not improved when the gong rang for luncheon in the dining-room in Balow Place. Thompson's head was in the air. Mrs. Charwood took her seat before a dish of over-cooked cutlets, and sent the offending parlour-maid out of her sight. But left alone, she showed no disposition for cutlets. She did not even think of Alfred's law suit. That tow-headed laddie in the kilt, with his independence, his Scots tongue, the straight stare from his merry blue eyes, his queer little rhyme—and his Jean! Obviously, the only Jean in the world was his Jean.

Years before, Mrs. Charwood had lived with her father and her young sister in a big dark Victorian house full of ugly furniture. Out of that house her sister Alice had gone to marry the man whom she loved, but who could only give her poverty along with his love. Alice had not cared, and she had been happy. She had laughed at poverty, and defied failure to make her bitter, and said that she longed for seven children. It was true that life had not met her challenge with her own gaiety, but it had never beaten her brave heart, which she had handed on to her girl, with the man for whom both had greatly cared. Aunt Helena looked back to

that long dead spring when Alice had been happy, and she had been worldly wise. It was full of sunshine, and of something else that was gone from the autumn sunshine of this September day in a luxurious dining-room with lunch laid for two. And that was—youth.

Where was Alice now? That did not matter. Her sister was in the hands of God in the country beyond sight. Where was the brave-eyed girl, whom she had turned from the door because she brought with her a small laddie whom she would not forsake, no matter what the consequences?

‘Just like Alice!’ said Helena to herself. ‘Mad! Quixotic! Uncalled for! Such people make their bed, and they deserve to lie on it.’

Mrs. Charwood turned to her congealing cutlet as the door was flung open, and her husband entered. Not a hair was out of place about him. His grey clothes and his linen were immaculate. He rang the bell and gave a curt order to Thompson; but Helena could see that his compact legal mind was uncomfortably disturbed.

A piercing tune was set up under the window in Bulow Place.

‘Send away that organ,’ her master bade Thompson. ‘We have lost the case,’ he added laconically, as the door closed.

‘How tiresome! And Thompson has given notice,’ replied his wife irritably.

Alfred Charwood had not shouted for more than two decades, but he almost shouted now.

‘Thompson!’ he cried furiously. ‘Thomp-

son! There are plenty of other Thompsons in London——'

'Oh, are there?' said his wife sarcastically, while the dining-room door opened and Thompson looked in.

'Did you call, sir?' she asked demurely.

'No!' was the short reply.

'There, Alfred!' exclaimed his exasperated wife. 'And I was hoping she would ask to stay on if I gave her a pound or two more.'

Mr. Charwood pushed back his chair, and rose to his feet. He lit a cigar with fingers that trembled. He stood on the thick rug and glared at his wife.

'You think of nothing but your own comfort, Helena,' he declared. 'You never did. It's your god, that and your silly fashion of aping a social position that is not yours.'

'Alfred!' exclaimed his wife.

'What have you ever cared for my success? All you wanted was an income that would let you live in Mayfair. I have lost my case, I tell you—and I made sure of winning it. I had right on my side, but I've been beaten by a youngster with brains, and no principle. What does it mean? That I am an old man, and the press will call me one to-morrow. I'm done, Helena. I may as well shut up my shop in Lincoln's Inn.'

'Well, your income can stand it, and you won't have two rents to pay,' said Helena. 'You are older than I am, you know. And you have no children to think of, fortunately. Be glad of that.'



There was a moment's silence in the room. Beyond Bulow Place the despised organ was playing 'Roses of Picardy.' A taxi rushed past, and a child's gay laugh was heard under the high narrow window of the house.

'Glad!' cried Mr. Charwood. 'Glad? Good Heavens, Helena, one might as well try to draw blood from a stone as from you. You never gave me a son. Should I be the lonely, withered, disappointed man that I am to-day, if I had a lad of my own to go on with my work? In all probability he would have won the case that I have lost to-day.'

'Humph!' ejaculated Mrs. Charwood. 'This is quite a new song, or rather dirge, for you, Alfred. Your son might have been a waster, who gave you nothing but trouble and impertinence. It is the character of most young people to-day.'

Alfred Charwood walked out of his own dining-room and positively banged the door behind him. As he did so he shut it upon other things besides the career at the Bar, which he considered that day had closed.

His wife was left behind with her coffee-cup. A startled expression sat on her carefully-massaged face. Through the years behind them she and Alfred had both congratulated themselves upon the fact that they had no family to educate, no noisy children in Bulow Place.

'And now he upbraids me that I have given him no son,' said Alfred's wife aloud. 'What has happened to the world when Alfred Charwood talks like that?'

Mrs. Charwood stared at her coffee-cup, and finally drank the concoction before it was stone-cold. But what she saw was a tow-headed laddie in a kilt with bare legs, whose writing on the pavement seemed like the writing of old on the wall—something fateful, with the finger of God in it. And he belonged to one called Jean, and Jean had been Alice's, and Alice had been hers—in the day before a smart door in Bulow Place and a row of spotless doorsteps barricaded her heart.

'Pshaw! Rubbish! I want a tonic,' said Aunt Helena, as she rang the bell and went away to rest behind drawn silk curtains before she was due at a smart afternoon party. 'Alfred is foolishly depressed, and I am nervous. What have we to do with children? They are not in our line. Any good fortune that we possess we have worked for, and deserved. Good fortune indeed, in a back alley like Bulow Place!'

With a short laugh Mrs. Helena wrapped herself in a cosy dressing-gown, and lay down on a low couch in her room before a gas-fire with a society paper in her hand. But somewhere out in the sunshiny day that persistent piano-organ would sound in her ears. It seemed to have set to music those queer old words that would ring tiresomely and persistently in her memory:

Friday Christ died upon the tree  
For other folk as well as me.

Jamie grew tired of playing at being a pavement artist. He took out a rather grubby square of cotton with a coloured border and wiped off the rhyme he had written. After all, he mused, perhaps you could not do in London just the same things that you did on the shore at Gairlie. A sudden swift longing for the stretch of heather on the high cliffs, for the broad blue sea, and the fairy islands suddenly rose within him, and caused him to draw several long breaths under his tweed jacket. He even wiped a tear out of his eye with a corner of his kilt. Then he got on to his legs and trotted into Holborn. Jamie could tell the time, and he discovered that it was past his dinner-time.

Jean had left him some buns and a mug of milk in the attic cupboard when she went out, forgetting to make him promise not to follow. She thought he was cured of his wandering ways, whereas in London Jamie had not yet got into his stride or fully taken his bearings. Besides, he had been sadly hampered with promises, which he invariably kept. This morning he had felt himself to be a free man.

He turned the corner of Holborn, and presently recognized that he was in the big square where he had pursued a thief on his arrival in London. So he turned down the same street as on that occasion, and climbed the same railings, which made him feel at home.

Presently he saw the steps of the tall house

with the Jacobean door, and remembered that here lived Peter Pan's cousin.

'I'll go and have tea with him,' said Jamie aloud. He walked up to the door, reached up, and pulled a big old-fashioned bell, and listened with pleasure as it pealed through the house.

Sarah Sykes, who lived with her husband in the ground-floor kitchen, and acted as cook-in-ordinary and adviser-in-chief to Mr. Pryme, hastened to the door in double-quick time. She started when she saw Jamie, as though here was one of her master's elves in the flesh. Jamie stepped confidently into the hall.

'I've come to see Peter Pan's cousin,' he said.

'Bless my buttons!' replied Sarah. 'I suppose yer mean Mr. Pryme, sonny. He's been inquired for at this door by such a strange ruck of names that yer couldn't surprise me with one of 'em. Come upstairs. I reckon yer've come to yer tea; they most of 'em have. It's not many days that Mr. Pryme takes it alone.'

She took Jamie by the hand as she spoke, and marshalled him up a broad shallow staircase and round a corner to the big library on the first floor.

'Here's one o' your friends, sir,' she said. 'And I suppose I had better bring up tea with plenty of jam and suchlike. This one said he had come to see Peter Pan's cousin. The last one was a little girl as wanted Santa Claus's brother.'

Sarah went off chuckling, while Jamie

walked into the room and stood on the hearth-rug between the fire and the desk.

'I've come,' he said. 'Jean's out. She's gone to a school to get up her speed before she goes to be a secretary to Mr. Magson—the gentleman with the big coloured bottles, you know.'

'I know—is that so? Good! And you have come to tea with me? I'm so glad. Come nearer to the fire; the afternoon is drawing in cold.'

'I've not had my dinner yet,' remarked Jamie in his broadest Scots.

'You've had no dinner? What havers! Sarah!' called out Mr. Pryme at the door. 'The laddie has had no dinner. Bring him a sandwich or a plate of pie or something. Tut! tut! This will never do. What's gone wrong in Pilgrim Street?'

'Nothing,' said Jamie easily. 'There was buns and milk in the cupboard; but I haven't been off with the raggle-taggle gypsies since I came to London, so I went out—and then I came here.'

Richard Pryme threw back his head, and laughed.

'And you found this old raggle-taggle gypsy,' he said. 'I wonder how Sarah Sykes would like that?'

'Anybody would like the raggle-taggle gypsies, wouldn't they?' inquired Jamie. 'But me and Jean thought, when we came all that long way in the train to London, we shouldn't see them any more. There's different kinds,

I think. The London kind doesn't live in tents and go about in carts, I 'spose.'

Jamie looked round the room as he spoke. He almost expected its walls to collapse into the shape of a caravan jogging round Royal Square.

'Oh! I don't know,' said Mr. Prime. 'What are gypsy-like people, after all? Are they not folks who decide to live cheerfully and rather dangerously, because they care more for beauty and gaiety and comradeship than they do for money? Thoughts are more to them than newspapers, pictures than print. They thank God sometimes for queer things, and most of all for understanding. That is the greatest gift that God can give you, laddie, the power to understand. That gives you a gypsy soul. It never stands still; but neither does it ever reach its destination, for that lies beyond sun and moon and the mystery of stars, and only God can show you the way there.'

'I know,' said Jamie, coming closer to the old man and speaking in a whisper. 'It's a fairy tale. There was a wood like that at Gairlie. Of course it was Mr. Carmichael's wood, really; but Jean said we could go into it because the fairies allowed us. Rowan-berries grew there, ye know, down in a wee glen; and the fairies had planted them because they wanted the place to themselves. You had to pretend you had gone to look for blackberries; and if you ac'dentally met a fairy, you had to look as though you only



saw the leaves or the stones, or something. You see, people who really went for blackberries didn't care about fairies. They wanted to sell the blackberries at market.'

'Of course,' agreed Mr. Pryme. 'A lot of people think they are looking for fairies when really they are out for blackberries or searching in the dust for they don't know what. It may be gold dust, but it is only dust after all. They don't know a secret that you and I know—where to find the fairies. Of course lots of fairies live in the Highlands. They always did, and more must have gone to join them.'

'Jean said so,' agreed Jamie. 'Except Peter Pan—he lives in London.'

'Yes, we have got him. Nothing can alter that. And I don't believe he would leave us if he got the chance. He is a Londoner born and bred, and beloved,' said the old man, who was the friend of all elves human and magical. 'And here comes tea, with an egg for you, and pink blancmange, and other attractive things. Now let us have the little round table, Mrs. Sykes, and a cushion for this young man. There! And if Dr. Warenne comes with a paper, don't let him go. Send him up here.'

'Right, sir,' said Sarah Sykes, going away.

For a few minutes Jamie was too busy to talk. It was not much later than three o'clock; but he suddenly discovered that his appetite was the biggest part of him, though very often he forgot all about it. He was joined

by Mr. Pryme when they reached the scones, for which Sarah was famous.

'Mrs. Anderson made scones,' said Jamie, with his mouth full. 'Down at home at Gairlie. She used to send us them for daddy's tea. Daddy died, you know, and then we couldn't live at Gairlie any longer, because Jean said our house belonged to a gentleman who had died too, and so it couldn't be ours any more. It was very puzzling, but Jean understood. We stayed a wee while, and then we came here.'

Richard Pryme listened to the little voice between Jamie's bites, and suddenly the meaning of the child's story dawned on him. For an instant it sounded like one of his own fairy tales, then he sat up in his armchair, and his white hair seemed to spring up too, as his wise eyes looked at the little chap opposite.

'Where did you say you lived before you came to London?' he asked.

'At Gairlie,' replied Jamie. 'It were lovely at Gairlie, with heather and the sea and islands in it, and sometimes we went across, and in winter the wind blew and it snowed, and sometimes Jock Anderson took me fishing. Yon was an honest man. He was like you, I think. Should you think he was Peter Pan's cousin too?'

'More than likely,' nodded Richard. 'And what was the name of the man in whose house you lived until your daddy died?'

'Well you see, the gentleman died too,' Jamie stated. 'It was Mr. Carmichael; and

Mrs. Anderson, she said to Jean, "Aweel, Miss Jean, I think shanne that he hasna left ye a wee fortune, an' he your father's friend forbye." But Jean she got very red, and almost cross, and she said, "I dinna want his money, nor his hoosie. I only want a bit chance for the laddie." Jean doesn't often speak Scotch. She won't let me; but she did then, herself. I didn't understand. It got puzzlinger and puzzlinger; and then we went to sleep at Mrs. Anderson's, and came away in the train.'

'Well! well!' said Richard Pryme. 'They tell us that London is a big place and easy to lose yourself in. It's a cosy wee village where we all know our neighbours, it seems to me. Bloomsbury is, any way. You did right, laddie, to come to Pilgrim Street. You'll find yourselves there, and maybe your sister will find the biggest thing in the world.'

'Where?' asked Jamie with round eyes. 'Behind the three big bottles in Mr. Magson's shop?'

'Maybe, maybe,' laughed Mr. Pryme. 'But I don't think so. I think it is more likely to be hidden somewhere under the doctor's red lamp at the corner.'

'I'll look,' said Jamie.

'Yes, do,' agreed his new old friend.

When Morris Warenne came round to Royal Square that evening between two visits, he was amazed as he ran up stairs to hear a child's laugh though he knew how many small

friends Richard possessed. It was dusk as he entered the room, for both the elderly boy and the little one had forgotten all about sending Jamie home. They were telling tales, and looking at pictures, and making adventures out of the fire. They both jumped as Morris came in.

'This is my young friend who took a piece out of a London urchin's trousers before he had been an hour in this town,' said Mr. Pryme, introducing the little boy who stood up stiffly at attention, and looked rather uneasy.

'It was 'cause he took Robin Gray,' said Jamie anxiously, as his small brown hand lay in the doctor's big one. Jamie looked up, and knew that he had made another friend.

'Bless my soul, it's six o'clock,' went on Mr. Pryme. 'They will be sending the bellman round. Morris, will you take this laddie home, and tell his sister to blame me for his shortcomings, and always to look for him in Royal Square when she has mislaid him, which I'll warrant is pretty often.'

'Net when I promise,' put in Jamie. 'But I didn't to-day.'

'And tell Miss Grame that I am coming to call on her. She is your neighbour, you know, Morris; but I suppose your good manners will always be vicarious.'

'I'm too busy for etiquette,' said Morris. 'Wait until she is ill.'

'Indeed, I shall do nothing of the kind, you egregious young ass. Illness won't come

near Jamie's sister in a hurry unless she loses that look of a high heart, which, pray God, she may not. She is going to be Magson's secretary and assistant.'

'He's a good chap,' returned Morris absently. 'Now, little fellow, are you ready? Had you a cap? No! I've a sick baby to sit up with to-night, I believe, and one or two serious cases on. I haven't much time. I'll look in about ten thirty, Richard, for a cup of tea.'

'It shall be ready. Don't forget my message.'

The tall doctor and the little boy walked out into Royal Square, and were friends before they had left the shadow of the plane-trees and turned into Pilgrim Street. The door of No. 8 was open, and Ruth and Mrs. Spender stood looking anxiously up and down.

'Here he is!' cried Ruth.

'And thank God for a naughty lad as will break his sister's 'cart!' burst from Mrs. Spender. 'And us thinking he was up in the attic all day, and the pore young lady quite comfortable at her typing-school, pore dear. If we'd known as he was with you, doctor——'

'He wasn't,' said Morris. 'He was with Mr. Pryme. Will you tell Miss Grame, with Mr. Pryme's compliments, that when she has mislaid her little brother, she must look first for him in Royal Square. He has come to no harm.'

'I'm sure—bless his untidy 'air and 'is

kilt!' said Mrs. Spender. 'And next week he is going to school. Goodnight, doctor, and thank yer kindly. Lor', Jamie, but yer 'ave give us a fright.'

Jamie followed Ruth into her parlour behind the shop, and sat meekly waiting for his sister's return, wondering why there was such a fuss because he had been off with the raggle-taggle gypsies. It was nothing new. Outside in the dark Morris Warene hurried in the direction of his own red lamp, and, as he did so, suddenly almost collided with the figure of a girl who was coming towards him wearily as though she were very tired and glad to be getting home. The doctor paused to apologize, and suddenly the girl's face lit with a smile. It was so sweet, so courageous, and her brown eyes were so full of light, that it almost startled Morris in the dark of Pilgrim Street. He muttered an apology, and went on; but that eager, vivid, though tired face went with him. He opened his surgery door with a latchkey, and stood for a moment almost dazzled by he knew not what. Then he drew a short breath.

'That must have been Miss Grame,' he said. 'The boy's sister, and also—also—the girl whose face reminded Richard of Ben Jonson's old poem,

Give me the look, give me the face,  
That makes simplicity a grace.

Well; I—don't—wonder.'

Morris turned to his notebook and made up a prescription, finding, to his horror, that



he nearly forgot to include in it a certain very necessary drug. He pumped his bicycle, out of patience with himself, lit his lamps, and went off towards Holborn. But all the time he knew that he was eager to get back to Royal Square to hear Richard talk about Jean Grame.

Over the library fire in Royal Square Richard Pryme, with his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his black velvet jacket, wondered what he should do. He had not a doubt in his mind of the meaning of Jamie's straightforward story. Jean Grame and her little brother were the two whom Morris had turned out of their home when his unwanted inheritance came to him. Jean was the lass from the north whom he had sworn to find, and he, Richard Pryme, had already found her.

'And made for the lad she is. I wonder if he has found that out, or bungled matters as he would do if he could. Suppose I tell him to-night what I have discovered. Maybe he will go straight to the lassie in his clumsy fashion and offer her the half of what old Carmichael left him. The girl would send him about his business, and think it charity from a stranger; for the lassie is proud. 'Tis another way in which Morris must offer her the goods, as to-day's slang would have it. Maybe I'll trust to luck and chance, or call it the guiding of God, and leave well alone. Maybe I'll tell him to-night. I wonder which it will be.'

## CHAPTER VII.

### Several Ambitions.

A happy life is what all desire, and no man is without a longing for it. Where then, have they known it, that they so desire it?—*Stout Abbotstone.*

THE clock from Holborn to King's Cross were striking one on Saturday, the hour of release to many thousand people for whom the week's end meant romance, leisure, or an exchange of cares. For the first time in her life one of these was Jean Graine. It had been the longest week of her life too, though it had not been all dull drudgery. She had found Conduit Street to be a very human street.

On Monday morning she had seen Jamie's tow head disappear within the doorway of the nearest council school, and perhaps that had been the hardest moment of the week. But it had passed, and at the end of five days Jamie Graine seemed to have but added a new zest to his life, and his old bloom was still there. Jamie was of the company whom the world cannot soil, for he would always carry his atmosphere with him.

Each morning as she went to work the red lamp at the corner over the surgery door of Morris Warenne had given Jean

courage, she did not know why. And now she stood in Mr. Magson's little office, waiting for her first week's earnings, and not without a feeling of pride in that fact. It was the little chemist himself who was nervous.

'Come in, come in, Miss Grame,' he had said fussily when the shop door was locked. 'Well! We have had a great week, I consider—a great week. I am more than satisfied with the success next door. Those black silk bags with the tassels—they have boomed, simply boomed. I think there cannot be a lady of any standing in our adjacent squares who has not secured one. Rather tasty, those tassels, are they not? The touch of gold livens them up. The traveller now was very insistent that they are all the thing at present in the West End. You like them? Good! Ladies like yourself and Miss Robhart have such a knack for the beautiful. Ha! ha! ha!'

Mr. Magson rubbed his hands together with pleasure, as he nodded towards the airy trifles which he had added to his stock.

'Not that I am so struck on Miss Robhart's pots and jars,' went on the little man. 'Bit dingy on the 'ole, I think, and it's mostly cranks who buy them, between you and me, Miss Grame. An artist Miss Robhart is, not a business woman—not quite on the spot, like you and me. Ahem! Between us, we'll knock spots off Conduit Street with our little lot. I don't expect to rob Bond Street of its customers; but there's the squares, miss, the squares close at hand, at our back door

so to speak, and cash is cash whether it comes out of a boarding-house or a mansion. Maybe it's a bit readier out of the boarding-house at times. What do you think of that notepaper?'

'It is very—cheerful,' said Jean heartily. On the heather, nobody had ever called her a business woman, but no doubt in London it was a compliment.

'Yes, yes—it's cheerful; and that's what the world needs,' said Mr. Magson. 'Look at the rush for it—proves my words.'

'I'll do my very best to sell more of it next week,' said Jean earnestly, feeling that if she did not put her whole heart into bags with gold tassels, pink powder, and lavender notepaper, it should not be for lack of effort.

'You are capital, Miss Grame—capital,' cried the delighted shopkeeper. 'Just the very young lady I wanted and did not know where to find. Ah, trust Mrs. Spender; she has an eye. Invaluable woman as a landlady too. We shall do tophole, Miss Grame, if I may say so. We shall boom before Christmas. And I will tell you in confidence, Miss Grame, that I am ambitious. Yes, ambitious. And if you are ambitious, you must be audacious—yes, every time you must. That is what gets the goods nowadays. And if you've got cheek enough, and daring enough, and a bit of money saved, why, then advertise, my dear young lady, advertise for all you are worth. Chance it, and keep the corners of

your mouth turned up if you fail. But ten to one you won't fail.'

'And what are you going to advertise, Mr. Magson?' asked Jean, as she directed the letters and stamped them.

She spoke rather wistfully. Henry Magson was such a cheery little soul, and he had invited her with such a spirit of kindness to come in and win with him. Was this rushing, roaring ambition that darkened London, and made life so hard for all but a few, grinding its way into his soul too?

The little man looked at his new secretary seriously, and spoke in a lowered tone, as though the very sparrows in the yard behind his office had ears.

'That, Miss Grame, is just the difficulty,' he said. 'I'm a decent, honest, working chemist. That certificate framed on my wall was honestly come by, and obtained by hard work and midnight toil. I've never sold a bad drug, and I never will. But I am not inventive. I'm average, I am. And in this world since the war the last thing in the world you must be is average, if you want to make a stir. They told us it was going to be a finer world for everybody, and we were in the mood to listen to talk. They must ha' meant by everybody a few folks whose addresses they knew. I've made a bit o' money, but the name o' Magson remains what it was. I've got a bit saved for advertising; but between you and me, Miss Grame, in the way o' business, so to speak, I ain't

ever yet put together anything that I really thought worth advertising. What I want is one o' those proprietary articles that fetches the public, makes babies grow, mothers smile, or old men young, again. I'm a cautious man with what I've saved, and I don't see myself losing it on a whole-page newspaper stunt for one day only. I've sat up at nights getting cold feet over my experiments; but so far I ain't got there, and little short of a new elixir of life'll satisfy me.'

Henry Magson leaned one hand on the counter, and looked at Jean with serious eyes, his lips compressed with a sense of the importance of his subject. There was no humour in his face, but there was anxiety—that pathetic anxiety to succeed which dogs the hearts of many a mediocre man and woman who long to express something, yet have not the power.

Jean looked at the eager, small man, and longed to help him, with the impulse which was always the first to rise in her heart. Her clear eyes shone, and Henry mistook the sympathy for an interest which, as the week had gone on, he had found himself longing to rouse. Henry Magson had never dreamed dreams apart from his neat, well-stocked corner shop, his own flourishing business, with its three gay-coloured bottles for a sign. This new dream that had come to him gave him queer, disturbing feelings which had never before touched his business career, and he was not sure whether he liked or feared them.



As he spoke, Jean was carried suddenly back to Gairlie and her schooldays. She remembered those autumn afternoons when she came home across the heather, and saw the smoke rising from the Gairlie chimneys, and knew that there would be scones for tea. Life had been good then; but it had not always followed that she found Mrs. Anderson putting down a batch of her famous cookies on the shabby old fender while she got tea ready in the pleasant room which was dining-room, study, or nursery by turns, and a cosy old place impossible to spoil, as all three.

It quite often happened, in the years before Jamie was born, that the smoke poured from the chimney of a round grey turret, where Jean's father experimented in strange stinks and weird mixtures, with here and there an explosion, and now and then the joy of great success. He made wonderful fireworks for all the bairns in Gairlie. He wrote enthusiastic articles for scientific journals, and that was the end of it, except the dreams which came to him in the red firelight when Jamie's mother listened and believed, and Jean lay with her long legs on the shabby hearthrug, and sometimes wondered why the dreams never seemed to come true.

Francis Grame had said again and again with a frown between his fine brows that they would all have been a success if it were not for his dogged ill luck and his lack of opportunity. They were a success, he de-

clared, only he had no market, no money, no name blazoned on every hoarding, and his home was in a Highland backwater from which a journey to London cost the price of the family's boots.

After such an outburst Jean's father was often invisible for days; but the chimney of his turret did not smoke. There was one such occasion which Jean would never forget. Her father had come running from his primitive, amateur laboratory with a small glass full of a strange green liquid in his hand.

'Drink that, Clare, my angel!' he had cried. 'It will make you sixteen again. It's not the elixir of life, it's something better—it's the essence of youth. If I had only the money to float that perfectly genuine remedy, and flaunt it on the front page of the *Daily Mail*, we'd have a castle in Spain if it pleased you.'

'That's the kind we live in most of the time, you dear old dreamer,' Clare had laughed, and not without a rather rueful look at her patched shoes and Jean's darned elbows. But she had laughed, for with the exception of Helena Charwood, who had never been able to tolerate the sight of him, women had been good to Francis Grame, and had borne the brunt of his worst burdens.

When he died, and Jean, with ignorant eyes went through the contents of the battered old desk in the turret room, she came upon a little packet of formulae, neatly docketed and carefully tied with a bit of pink

string. She did not understand them; but she knew that they were the recipes for her father's cures and the formulæ for his experiments. He had been better than a doctor to many a Highland shepherd, and Gairlie believed in his ointments and his doses, when it ridiculed himself for a 'strange, feckless chield.' Long ago he would have been shut up as an alchemist or feared as a wizard. At Gairlie he was treated leniently as a harmless sort of lunatic.

It was the memory of what she had regarded as her father's fad, that suddenly shot into Jean's mind in Mr. Magson's office, as he stood confiding in her. He held in his hand the two pound notes which Jean had earned that week. It seemed to him very good pay; but he did not give her a hint that he thought so. It had rather an air of wealth to her, though some hours of that week had passed with leaden feet, and she thought she knew most of the passers-by in Conduit Street off by heart. One of them was Dr. Morris Warenne, and at the end of this strenuous week Jean Grame had begun to have some faint, flitting idea of what he meant to Conduit Street.

Jean took her two pounds from her employer with a pretty, gracious smile, and a quick bend of her head in thanks, which nearly caused him to lose his own. Instead he thanked her hurriedly for neither of them knew what, and Jean went home in the middle of a grey Saturday, enjoying the dry, cool

autumn day, and feeling not altogether unlike the little brown leaves that came dancing down Pilgrim Street out of Royal Square.

Jamie had made friends during the week. It was impossible for him to be anywhere without doing that, and he found young Bloomsbury gregarious. On this Saturday afternoon he was seated on a doorstep in Pilgrim Street, with Robin Gray under his arm, and all was right with his world. Jean had their odd little flat to herself as she rummaged in her trunk for the small packet of her father's papers which she had brought to London with her when she had left most of his other belongings in Mrs. Anderson's attic.

The small top front parlour of the tall narrow house had been made into a charming place by Jean, with curt, abrupt, but wonderfully effectual suggestions from Ruth Robhart standing in the doorway. The girl from the north was full of the housekeeping instinct; but she must have somebody else for whom to spend it. The young woman who kept the pottery-shop had a solitary soul; but she too knew how to make a home.

The old couch was covered with bright chintz now, in which blue and crimson shone in the shadowy room. There was a gay scarlet blanket which covered Jamie at night, and the narrow windows were hung with striped cotton. At each side of the fire stood a big brown wicker chair piled with cushions. Above the old cupboard were bookshelves,

sparsely filled as yet. On the narrow mantelshelf and the round table autumn flowers stood in some of Ruth's jars. Jean had been unable to resist them as she came home with two pound notes in her hand.

She sat down in front of the little fire that she had lit, and looked at the papers. Their scrawl in Latin conveyed nothing to her as she scrutinized it; but she remembered the bright-green compound which her excited father had called the 'Essence of Youth.' It was surely a name to conjure with; but was Henry Magson the conjuror? Would he take any account of these yellowing scraps of paper if she presented them, or would he snub her for presuming to help him? Mr. Magson was not exactly the kind that snubs. During the week just past Jean had been first surprised, then amused, and lastly touched by his confidences. How tremendously interested in the shop at the corner he must be, she thought. It never occurred to her for one moment that he was daily more tremendously interested in herself.

The papers fell apart in her lap, and Jean leaned back in the comfortable chair, and watched the flames leap up in the tiny old-fashioned grate. Beyond the windows she could hear the roar of London, softened to a hum that both soothed and excited her. The isles of the western seas belonged to a different world. Their beauty was with her still; but she had reached a place during the last week where the throb of the hearts about

her was the throb of her own. At Gairlie her sympathy had been with those whose lives she knew and who knew hers. All this week she had watched the throng of strangers go up and down the rather frowsy street of Central London. Unconsciously she had come to watch for some of them, though the never-ceasing surge of strangers still amazed her. 'So many worlds, so much to do,' were the words that had rung in her head all the week. She felt what they meant, and the thought exhilarated her. In this great, sad, mad, human, perplexing, wonderful world of London she, Jean Grame, had found a niche. Was there any little piece of salvation there for her to work out?

A tap sounded at the door.

'Come in,' said Jean cheerfully.

The door opened, and Ruth Robhart came into the room. She looked tired, and her plain, sensible face wore an air that might almost have been described as wistful.

'Are you busy?' she asked casually. 'I didn't feel like going out, and I haven't a job to finish for anybody this week-end. There is a cold wind driving down from the square. Your fire looks inviting, and how cosy it is up here!'

'Isn't it?' said Jean enthusiastically. 'I'm delighted with my sky parlour, though it owes most of its charm to you. Come and sit down, and we'll have tea together. I don't quite know where Jamie is; but I hope he's all right. After all, we came up to



London to seek independence, so I expect I must let him find it.'

'He's found it,' said Ruth. 'Jamie's the kind that never comes to harm; it will slip off him always if it touches him.'

'Ah! I believe you are right. He is one of those elf children who come to the world to show it what it might be without saying so. You see, he was born within sight of the western isles; and no doubt the fairies had a look at him before he reached his cradle.'

Ruth looked into the fire and said nothing. She loved beauty; but fairies had not come her way. She glanced at the papers on Jean's chair as Jean made the tea in the squat little pot from the fat tin kettle, both out of Conduit Street.

'I love kettles,' said Jean; 'and teapots. I am sure a fat little round tin kettle has a personality of its own. One would not get so attached to it if it hadn't, or take such a sudden fancy to some special one in a shop.'

Ruth laughed rather shortly. She was not in the mood for mirth, and Jean suddenly felt it.

She poured out the tea, and put the papers down on the chest of drawers.

'Those are some old chemical things of my father's,' she said. 'I—I've been wondering a rather strange thing. My father used to dabble in chemicals and mixtures in an old turret in Scotland. He was a sort of chemist. Perhaps that is why I felt

drawn to the job round the corner. To-day, when we shut up shop, and all the bills were made out and ready to be posted, Mr. Magson was talking to me.'

'Not for the first time this week, I expect,' said Ruth with a faint smile.

'He is rather a chatterbox, isn't he?' laughed Jean. 'But, then, he is such an enthusiast. I think chemists must be. My father was like that—sometimes.'

'Is he?' mused Ruth. 'I've lived in the same house for three years, and never found it out. He doesn't admire my pots and jars and rugs and baskets; though he sometimes comes in to exchange views on business in Bloomsbury. But I have never heard his secrets.'

'Secrets?' said Jean, looking surprised.

Then she paused. Mr. Magson certainly had said that he was telling her his big hope in confidence. She wondered why he should do that. It was Ruth who answered her thought.

'People will always tell you their secrets,' she said, 'and give you bits of their burdens to carry. It's written in your face. You will hear lots of sad stories as time goes on—perhaps more sad than glad ones, for people in trouble are selfish. Perhaps sometimes they will make you unhappy, though not altogether, because you are the kind that not only wants to help, but does help.' And so, whatever your own difficulties, you will never have a lonely heart.'

Jean smiled, and flushed slightly.

'It sounds a bit like a fortune-teller at Gairlie fair,' she said. 'People's stories are so interesting. I never hear a dull one. It is no credit to me to listen.'

'Ah! It is generally the listener's fault as well as the teller's when a tale is dull,' said Ruth rather grimly. 'Some people never hear anything but dull ones. Mine is a dull tale. In fact, it isn't a tale at all; it's only an incident. I've not told it to any one since I put my little all into a pottery-shop in Pilgrim Street, and tried to put my soul there too. Perhaps I succeeded. If I am not riotously happy—and who is?—I am very comfortably content. That is a lot, particularly on a grey windy autumn afternoon in London. I'd like to tell you something about myself, if I may; that is, if it won't bore you stiff—and if we really are friends. I distrust people; I can't help it. Yet I am going against the habit of quite a number of years, for I trust you as I used to trust just a few people before I grew up into a person who doesn't mean to be taken in twice.'

Jean gave the fire a poke. The room was growing dark. Firelight glanced on the bare walls in friendly, homely fashion. That presence of hearts and homes and histories which makes the magic of Central London seemed to shut itself in with the two girls.

'I was born in the Home Counties,' said Ruth. 'There is simply nothing remarkable in me of any kind. I'm just mediocre. I

didn't come from wild, wonderful places like you.'

'Savage haunts,' put in Jean.

'No, mine were suburban,' smiled Ruth. 'A little town, half country, half on the edge of London, with new shops, and omnibuses, and fine houses growing up round old common lands among the pines. My father was a schoolmaster, and I went to his school, just one with the rest. My mother was different. She was the daughter of a clergyman, and she had married a village schoolmaster against the will of all her family except her father, who died before he knew that as time went on she was not unhappy. I have never met any of her people, for she herself died when I was fourteen. It was her small capital that set me up in shop, and I think she would have thought it was well spent. As she really was a gentlewoman, she therefore was not any kind of snob—not even the intellectual kind, which is the worst, because it has least excuse.

'My father meant to make a teacher of me,' went on Ruth. 'But his health failed before he had sent me to college, and then all his savings went in doctors' bills, for neither of us could touch my mother's little capital until he was dead. I didn't care, I was not brainy. I liked doing things with my fingers—I do still. I like beautiful objects more than ideas, which only worry me, whereas coloured pots and jars make me content.'

‘Yes, they’re comforting,’ agreed Jean, though in a rather doubtful voice.

‘Life was very dull when my father was ill,’ continued Ruth. ‘I had never been his companion, my mother was that; and after her death he was a morose man, caring only for his work, which was well done. When he grew too ill to teach, a young man came down to take his place—a man who is working in London now, whose name I sometimes see in the papers at conferences or attached to articles that seem to me brilliant, though I am no judge of anything intellectual. He came often to the schoolhouse, and in the end he lodged with us. He and I used to talk, and he liked my arrangement of things, and my cooking, and my flowers, and the way I kept his room. I used to stand and look at his books and wish I could appreciate them. I think I did appreciate Ralph Hope’s pictures; but, then, pictures have always meant more to me than print.

‘If I had realized that I—I was growing to love Ralph Hope, I would somehow or other have crushed the feeling out of myself,’ said Ruth bitterly; ‘for I always felt that nothing could really come of it. We walked in the lanes and talked; but it was he who talked and I who listened, for he talked—generally—about his work; and though I was a teacher’s daughter, I had never paid much attention to schools. I thought they were dreary places, that made those who worked in them severe in manner and critical. Ralph

had great ambitions, and I used to thrill when he talked about them. He meant to come to London, and one summer, just for a time, he thought that he wanted me to come with him.

'During the holidays he used to write many letters to me. At first I couldn't believe them, and I tore them all up, because I knew that if ever he wrote different ones it would hurt me to read those first ones. Yet some of their phrases stayed in my heart. I wish they had not. They taught me a new kind of sweetness in life, and they made me want things that were not for me. Memory makes life fuller, but makes it hurt more.'

Jean listened; she felt, however, that she had not reached the place in life through which Ruth had stepped. She looked at the strong face in the firelight, and then back into the red heart of the fire. But she saw the future there, where Ruth watched the past.

'When Ralph came back for the autumn term,' said Ruth, 'my father had not very long to live. Ralph helped me through the difficult time, and then he told me that he loved me. For a year he was head of the school, and I left the schoolhouse and let him have it just as it stood. I came to London to learn a new kind of needlework, and I got a place in a queer cranky pottery-shop, where I learnt what to buy and how to sell it. I took to it, and loved it; and on Saturdays I used to meet Ralph, and we



prowled about the parks or went out to Surrey lanes. But something was wrong. It was always of his work that we talked, never of mine; and his letters were not the same. At last one day I went down by the Embankment alone, and fought it out with myself. I don't say that I was not angry. Expectations had been raised in me where I had never looked for hopes. And now every thing had just—fizzled out. There was nothing sensational about it. It just happened inevitably, and left a dreary blank.

'I had not brought the thing about which had given me such happiness for a time. I had never known how to attract a man, though I know that I should have made a loyal wife, and perhaps a better mother. Ralph had discovered that he did not want me after all; and when I had taken myself in hand, I didn't blame him. Why on earth should he continue to want me when he found me dull and not up to his standard? He laughed at my coloured pots and my bits of needlework; but I made up my mind that they should fill my days, and that I would forget Ralph Hope. I told him I thought we had made a mistake, and that neither of us was a marrying sort. He agreed without much more than a demur, and I think what I said was true. I sold him my father's books, and I took a few bits of furniture and came to Mrs. Spender's. I put my heart into blue pottery and other folk's teapots and flame-coloured jars, and I tell you there

is comfort in things you can handle and things you can make, if there's beauty in both and use and pleasure for those who buy them. After all, I am not the only person in the world. Why should I have just the happiness I might have liked best? Probably I was made for a solitary life and the job of a pattern old maid, new style. It was the old-fashioned ones who bedewed their pillows with tears. Nowadays we scarcely know what such a queer old word means. And Ralph Hope is doing a lot of good. Probably he wouldn't have had time to do it if he had married me. He is putting a good many things right under the London County Council, and incidentally London is getting to know his name.'

Ruth stopped speaking, and sat back in the wicker chair, which was a kind that does not creak. Her action said that she did not know whether she was glad or sorry that she had spoken; but there was the tale such as it was, poor or pitiful or plain, and Jean might make what she could of it.

Ruth did not know that Jean was silent because she was suddenly overwhelmed by all the stories that must exist behind plain strong faces and hard-working hands. Her own experience seemed to dwindle to nothing. She drew a long sigh, and leaning forward put her hand on the arm of Ruth's chair.

'You've told me a lot besides the story,' she said quietly. 'It—it would be impertinent

to say anything else. Perhaps we neither of us understand it all. Perhaps he—didn't.'

A sudden light flamed in Ruth's eyes and died down.

'I've thought that—but—I don't go on thinking it,' she said. 'I do very well. And—thank you. I feel what you think. It's just—that I wanted to tell you.'

Ruth rose to her feet in the roselit gloaming. She put out her hand, and Jean took it. At that moment the door of the attic parlour was thrown open, and Jamie burst in, breathless, flushed, his tow head like an excited mop, his tongue that of the western isles.

'Jean!' he said, 'I'm verra sorry, but I canna thole thae breeks. They catch hold o' everything that comes near me. The stuff canna be good. I'll wear my kiltie whiles; and if the lassies speir at ma and it gars the laddies laugh, why, I canna help it, and what matters it, forebye?'

'Oh, laddie, laddie, it's your sister who will laugh,' said Jean, turning him round, while Ruth laughed too before she slipped away. Most of Jamie's new 'breeks' seemed to be conspicuous by their absence. His face was rueful, but there was a gleam of triumph in his eye.

'I'm a Scots laddie, ma doo,' he said affectionately. 'Do ye want me to be like an English chield?'

'I don't know, my bairn,' returned Jean. 'But it seems hopeless to think you will be.'

'I ken fine I canna,' stated Jamie gravely,

as Jean helped him out of his ragged and uncongenial garments, and told him a story without a moral as he sat in his nightgown on the rug. The story left him thinking, for she had made it up, and it dealt with a lonely heart. Jean sat and thought about it herself long after Jamie slept and hunted mythical cockneys in his dreams under the shelter of his scarlet blanket.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Some Meetings.

The lowest trees have tops, the ant her gall,  
The fly her speen, the little sparks their heat,  
The slender hairs cast shadows, though but small;  
And bees have stings, although they be not great.  
Seas have their surges, so have shallow springs;  
And love is love, in beggars as in kings.

*Archbishop Trench.*

D R. MORRIS WARRENNE bustled round his surgery, put back the bottles he had been using for the making up of a prescription, consulted his case-book for the next morning, and gave the fire a poke with the toe of his boot.

The bells were ringing for evening service; but Morris Warenne was not in the mood. He had just come home from a very bad case in a Bloomsbury slum, and his spirit was on fire against rich men who lived in luxury while puny babies starved on their unhealthy property. During the last month a good many babies had been to the country at Morris's expense. Already round Conduit Street the tale of his fortune had run into millions, and he was becoming a legend in his own locality. But slum mothers knew that it was not easy to throw dust into the

doctor's grey eyes, which could be so tender at times and at others like steel.

'I wonder what sort of babies grow on my own property up north,' said Morris aloud, yawning, and stretching out his hand for a paper. 'Maybe I'm one of these absentee landlords myself. I suppose I ought to run up and see what the place is like. But I'm not inclined. The whole thing irks me; I think I'll sell it. I've one or two folks in my eye for that pink villa near Cannes as the winter comes on; but I can't get away myself for a long time yet. And that girl—I've done nothing to find her, and my belief is that Flear isn't keen. He doesn't want to think he's in the wrong about her. I believe I'll put the old man on to the job. I wonder he hasn't put himself on to it before this time; but Richard doesn't seem quite himself somehow at present. He was surprisingly unresponsive the last time I mentioned the business. Hal! And that reminds me, he wouldn't talk about his young friends in Pilgrim Street either. I've never known him so uncommunicative as when I went in that night for a cup of tea and asked him quite a lot of questions about Jamie—and his sister. I wonder why. Generally half a syllable can set off the old boy about his favourites. I hope Richard is all right; but if I suggested a tonic, I might find myself head over heels down his fine Jacobean staircase.'

Morris laughed, and the paper rustled to the floor. He sat in a brown study, with his

eyes on the spark of fire in the grate. Though he was scarcely conscious of the fact himself, he was thinking of a tall girl with a free straight walk and a pair of brave, shining, brown eyes—just the kind of eyes that Morris Warenne would like to meet his for the rest of his life. He was a very long way from putting such a thought into any kind of form, much less into words. He shook himself up presently, and yawned.

‘I believe I was nearly asleep,’ he said. ‘I’ve had a stiff week, and I declare I haven’t been near the old man since last Sunday. I’ll go round there now. It’s half-past six, and he may have gone to church; but his fireside is more inviting than mine, and maybe he has got some new books. Heaven send I shall not have another call to-night.’

Morris put on his hat, and strolled round to Royal Square. It was very quiet there; for on Sunday evening it was given up to its own past, and the old houses had apparently forgotten their present descent into offices. Morris had a key to his friend’s front door. He put it into the Yale lock, and presently walked upstairs. Sarah Sykes, reading a penny weekly over the fire, did not hear him come in.

Morris went upstairs two steps at a time and into the library. As he opened the door, he saw that Richard was not there. But, to the amazement of Morris, a tall girl was standing between the fireplace and Mr. Pryme’s desk, looking earnestly at a picture hanging



on the wall. She turned as Morris entered, and he saw that it was Jean.

All that day something had troubled Jean. She could not get out of her mind the look in Ruth Robhart's eyes as she told her pitiful little story the day before. The story haunted Jean on this free and splendid Sunday, which seemed so leisurely after her strenuous week.

She and Jamie had been to church, not among fashionable folk or where popular preachers drew a crowd, but to an old Jacobean church among the markets. A few thoughtful faces were seen in the panelled pews. There was a garden outside, where robins sang in October, and low seats invited tired people to rest and stay.

Over the door hung a great scarlet flag of virginia creeper, its leaves dropping to the steps. This was truly the people's flag, for it was not a conventional church. But it was not the flag of carping dissension—it was the living colour of life and union.

To Jean there had been neither in the church that day. She had prayed not for herself, but for Ruth. Were all stories unfinished? Did many people in this great, crowded, surging London which had seemed wonderfully kind, grow tired and forget and go away? Was it only over the Border that hearts were loyal?

A sudden sweeping resentment against hardness and misery and poverty and loneliness swept over Jean, and seemed to take away a little bit of her youth. But no accident of



SHE TURNED AS MORRIS ENTERED, AND HE SAW  
THAT IT WAS JEAN.



circumstance could give a man a loyal heart. One could not buy another's love, or keep it with gold, position, or comfort. Even opportunity had no place here. It was a force in life which made all men equal.

Jean was scarcely conscious that a hymn had been given out until she heard herself singing the last verse.

By the overshadowing  
Of Thy gold and silver wing,  
Give to us who to Thee sing  
Holy, heavenly love.

A great sensation of protection came to her as the beautiful words rose and fell, and the sound of the organ died away into solemn silence and the stillness of the autumn day. Suddenly the thought of the old man, Jamie's friend, came to her mind. It was followed by the young one who had brought Jamie home. Jean had heard stories of Dr. Warrene during the last week in the corner shop. She thought of them now as she walked home with Jamie. Though they had nothing to do with her, they brought back her own courage. She supposed that it took all kinds of people to make a world. Mrs. Spender was fond of saying so.

'Jean, can I go to my tea with Mrs. Spender and Thomas this afternoon?' inquired Jamie at the door of the sky parlour. 'There's to be buttery muffins and watercress and London buns, and Robin Gray's to go too. Ye'll say yes, lassie, won't ye?'

'Of course, Jamie lad,' said his sister. 'But you'll not deave Mrs. Spender with your clash, will you?'

'Now ye're talkin' Scots yourself, Jeanie!' cried the little boy. 'Hoots! woman, I'll behave myself, like the canny laddie I can be at whiles.'

He was off with Robin, and Jean made tea for herself, and felt lonely.

'It must be the effect of one week as a business woman,' said the girl aloud, trying to read, but putting her book down in desperation. The church bells rang; but they only carried her back to the little grey kirk on the hill above the sea, and she was homesick for the Highlands.

'Eh, but this winna dae, lassie,' she said to herself. 'Shall I gang to the kirkie? Na, na, 'tis a human like myself I want to foregather with to-night, but a better and wiser one. Ah, fine I ken what I will dae. I will go to see the wee old man with the white hair and the bairn's tongue who was so good to Jamie. He has been twice to see me, and I was out. It is only right that I should return his call. Maybe he will not be at home, but maybe he will. Anyway, I will chance it.'

The sound of Jamie's voice came up the staircase as Jean went down. The boy was happy enough, and had accepted Central London as he had always accepted everything that came his way. You could not surprise Jamie Grame with the chances and changes

of this mortal life. They were all in the day's work, only to Jamie it was more like the day's play.

Jean thought so with a smile as she walked down Pilgrim Street and turned into Royal Square. The beautiful old door of No. 15 itself looked hospitable. Jean rang the big bell with a firm hand, and was rather startled by the noise. Sarah Sykes looked quite unperturbed as she answered the door. It would have been impossible to surprise her.

'No, Mr. Pryme ain't in,' Sarah declared. She would have been of no use to her master if she could not have read faces, and she saw the disappointment in Jean's.

'What is your name, if yer please, mum?' she asked.

'Grame,' said Jean. 'My little brother ——

'Oh, are yer the sister o' that young limb in a kilt as was here the other day?' beamed Sarah.

'Yes,' said Jean with the smile which always won such as Sarah Sykes, and with a good deal of amusement that she owed her credentials to Jamie.

'If yer would like ter wait ter see Mr. Pryme, he'll not be that long,' said Sarah. 'I think he's at church; and if so, he'll be in when the time comes, and the library's quiet on a Sunday.'

It sounded inviting, and Jean succumbed with only a little demur which Mrs. Sykes overruled in surprise. It was no uncommon event for Richard Pryme's odd visitor to

wait in his own sanctum. There was nothing there which he did not share with all who could enjoy it.

So Jean found herself ushered into a spacious room where her feet sank into a thick carpet, a fire snapped in an old fashioned grate, and about her were things which warmed her heart and made her glad that she had come. The fit of depression took frightened feet and fled, as it does before what is beautiful and also real. Jean sat down in a big armchair, and leaned back in the crimson-shaded lamplight. In days to come, that were not born yet, there was always to be to her a glow of crimson about this room.

Just above the level of her eyes hung a charming picture of Swiss children dancing on the edge of a lake among the cowslips. They did it because they could not help it. The picture was full of the very joy of life. And under it was an odd little thing printed and framed. 'Get the spirit of joy into your printed page,' it said.

Jean rose to look more closely at it, and a picture above Mr. Pryme's desk caught her eye. It was a fine print of Holbein's 'Erasmus.' Jean looked long at the thoughtful, intellectual face with something more than either in it, as the subject of the picture wrote on the page before him. Jean wondered, and half knew, why Richard Pryme hung that picture over his desk. The question was in her eyes as she turned at the sound



of the opening door and found herself face to face with Morris.

It was he who almost lost his usual, easy, friendly manner as he took the girl's hand, and perhaps looked into her eyes a second longer than he should have done. Jean was scarcely surprised to see him. After all, was it not a likely thing that he should visit his friend on Sunday evening?

'I hope you don't think me a great intruder, Dr. Warenne,' Jean said simply. 'I came to return Mr. Pryme's two calls. He has been so good to Jamie, and I am so busy now that I have to let the laddie go off with the raggle-taggle gypsies as he calls it. I am afraid we are both a bit inclined that way, and don't quite know how we should behave in London. Mr. Pryme's housekeeper seemed to expect me to wait here to see him. I hope I am not taking a liberty. I was looking at that picture. It is beautiful.'

'Good!' said Morris, wheeling up the cosiest chair to the fire, and taking the opposite one himself.

He felt as though he were plunging straight into talk with a congenial old friend—and something more. Jean accepted the chair without demur, and Morris went on, talking easily.

'The old man always likes his young friends not to go away without seeing him unless they are pressed for time,' said the doctor. 'Unfortunately I often am; but, then, I drop in at midnight or any odd time. Many a tired

person spends a happy, solitary hour in this library. I tell him it is a cure in itself, and that I think I shall advertise it.'

Jean smiled.

'That would quite spoil it,' she said.

'It would; it's the atmosphere that does it—and the surprise,' replied Morris. 'You were looking at that Holbein. A fine thing, isn't it? Mr. Pryme has never said so, but I know why he hangs it there. He has never written a line at that desk of which he is ashamed, though at times he has printed some bitter words about other folk's sufferings. I think he looks at Erasmus most when he writes his fairy plays. They put the very truth and joy of life before bairns of all ages. I would have them acted free, and force all the misanthropes to go by Act of Parliament. Richard has discovered the Franciscan secret. Over there you see a picture of St. Francis preaching to the birds. It seems perhaps a silly thing to do. Richard would not have thought so. A saint is a person who makes it easier for other people to believe in what is good. That is not easy in the slums and squares round here; but Richard makes it possible. His joy doesn't spring from callousness and carelessness, but from harmony and patience. He searches for the truth with all his mind, and then he obeys it with his whole heart. It wouldn't make a bad new motto for England. She needs one.'

Morris laughed rather mirthlessly as his mind went back to some of the things he had

seen that day. Jean rose, and went to look at the picture of the Glorious Poor Little One talking to the birds.

'Most of the things that somebody thought silly are longest remembered, and often seem the biggest things in the end,' she said as she came back to her seat.

'Ah!' agreed Morris; and silence fell between them, the silence of sympathy.

A log fell apart in the fire, and Morris spoke again.

'The great French general Jacqueminot is remembered to-day as the name of a particularly lovely rose called after him in a time of war,' Morris mused. 'There is a lot in that, you know. Fragrance outlasts fighting. I hope Haig and Joffre will have their roses for remembrance when war is a barbarism at which all men shudder.'

'Even that learning to shudder is a help if we are not afraid to follow the line of thought which comes after it,' said Jean, looking up suddenly.

Morris saw the courage in her eyes, which came from a high heart, ready at that moment to follow wherever the deepest thoughts of life would lead her. She was the mate for him. She was the comrade. Perhaps at that moment he realized it, though his head did not tell him so.

'When we have left our self-contempt behind us as well as our fear,' said Morris hesitatingly. 'It is such a hindrance when we want to get anything done.'

'Have you ever felt a contempt for your self?' asked Jean.

'I feel something like that now,' declared Morris, turning in his chair so that the crimson glow of the lamp fell directly on his face, while Jean's was in shadow. 'You see, perhaps the old man has told you - -'

'I have not talked to him,' put in Jean.

'Ah, no, of course not; I forgot that. Well, Miss Grame, the fact is, that an uncle of mine—and I had nothing but contempt for him—has left me a fortune. I don't know myself with such an encumbrance.'

'It's not often regarded as that,' laughed Jean.

'No! So Flear the lawyer seemed to think—regards me as a self-conscious ass, I believe. But the whole business is a nuisance to me. I don't want to bother with it, and I don't want the money, except for artificial limbs and country holidays for the folks round here. That sounds like pose, I know; but it isn't. Maybe I can make use of a villa on the Riviera for the same purpose, and I hope old Uncle Carmichael won't come out of his grave and haunt my poor patients in the disgust of his selfish soul.'

Jean started.

'But what on earth can a fellow like me do with a moor up north?' said Morris. 'I can handle a gun, but I never have time. I'm wedded to London streets. I was born among them down East, and they've got me for keeps, to use an abominable slang phrase.'

Life's made me a worker, and I don't want to be anything else. I've known what it was to be poor in Poplar, Miss Grame. I had a hard childhood. I've held horses, and run errands for greengrocers, as a little lad, during my father's last illness, to help to keep a fire in the grate while Uncle Carmichael let my mother starve. I've no use for his money now.'

'I don't wonder,' said Jean softly, though her voice trembled slightly.

'And the worst of it is,' went on Morris. 'For now that I am up on my stump, I'll tell you the lot, if you've patience to listen.'

'I like to listen—I love listening,' put in Jean.

'Yes, you lead a man on with it, and he might bore you. But you and I both belong to the workers, I feel that. And you are from over the Border, aren't you?'

'I am,' agreed Jean.

Her voice was rather hoarse, and her heart was beating so loudly she thought Morris must hear it, and wonder what the reason was. For the last two minutes she had known what was coming.

'I don't think Richard told me what part of Scotland you both came from,' went on Morris innocently, and more calmly. 'Have you ever heard of a place called Gairlie, in the Highlands?'

There was a second's pause. Jean breathed rather hard; but she spoke quite quietly.

‘Yes!’ she said. ‘I know the--place. It is not a great distance from where we lived. It is up on the moors within sight of the sea and the western isles.’

‘That’s the place,’ said Morris. ‘Well, it’s mine, and I don’t want it. What is more, I never think of it without an uneasy feeling. There is a ramshackle old shooting-box, which nobody ever occupied in Carmichael’s time who was going to shoot. He let that, and the shooters came over from some hotel not far off.’

Didn’t Jean know it?

‘But some crack-brained experimental dreamer lived in the house. He was a friend of my uncle, they had been to school together, and he let him live in the house rent free. The only kind action Uncle Carmichael ever did, I should say. This dreaming person had a daughter; and since I came into the place she has gone—disappeared somewhere, and I’m bothered all the time as to whether the girl is in want or in danger or something. I feel as if I had robbed her of a home, don’t you know? I have set Flear on to the job of finding her, and young Flear reckons that he has done all he can. Mrs. Anderson, the factor’s wife, is apparently no scholar; but as far as Flear can make out, she does not know this girl’s address. She went to her aunt, Mrs. Anderson says. She wrote when she arrived in London, but she has not written since. The letter was dated from a station.’

'All quite right,' said Jean to herself. 'She was not sure why she left Mrs. Anderson without news, but now she knows. She will write and tell her to keep Jean Grame a secret.'

Jean sat up, and tried to look and sound matter-of-fact.

'I don't think the girl is your responsibility, Dr. Warenne,' she said. 'Perhaps she also is one of the workers, and has been wanting for years to get away from the north and into the world. Perhaps I have—a fellow feeling for her. You see, I also, when my father died, packed up and came to London, and very likely it was a rash thing to do. Probably she was glad of the chance, or is safe and happy. You don't know—that she is not with her mother's people.'

'That is practically what Flear said,' Morris looked puzzled, and slightly disappointed.

He understood people's bodies, but he told himself that evidently he had not fathomed a girl's point of view.

'I wanted to make it up to her,' he went on rather ruefully. 'I would have given her the place if she would have taken it. I think she had more right to it than I. And if she didn't want it, she may be needing money. Old Carmichael ought to have done something for her. She has a right to a big slice. The people at Gairlie evidently thought so.'

Jean flushed in the crimson lamplight. She drew herself up ever so slightly, but she said nothing.



'Do you think—you, a girl yourself, that I had better mind my own business?' asked Morris.

'Yes,' answered Jean.

'Would you want me to do so if you were the girl in question?'

'Yes,' said Jean again.

Silence fell between them again; but it was not, as a moment ago, the silence of a slight rebuff. Once again each felt the instinctive sympathy of the other. Jean rose from her chair.

'I think I must go home,' she said. 'I'm so sorry, but you see there is Jamie. He has spent the evening with Mrs. Spender; but I think she will be tired of him.'

'Not she,' said Morris. 'Mrs. Spender isn't the kind that tires of things. She's seen too many, not to know what to choose.'

'I am glad she chose us,' said Jean.

'Who wouldn't?' Morris ventured; and his tone was more enthusiastic than he knew. 'I say,' he continued boyishly as he opened the door into the square, 'it's quite early, and look at the moonlight. It's wonderful on Sunday nights in London. There is time to see it then. Come for a walk round the squares before you turn in.'

Jean hesitated; and we all know that therefore she was lost. She went round the squares, and she and Morris talked, though what about they could never accurately remember. Each knew that up to that moment it was the talk of their lives.

In the course of the next three-quarters of an hour they passed the great aloof building of the Museum and turned into the quiet of Bulow Place. The leaves were dropping and rustling about them, and some fell on to Jean's shoulders, which is supposed to bring good luck.

It happened that Mrs. Charwood, as they passed No. 11, was just rising from her solitary dinner-table; for Alfred was in his dressing-room with a cold. She went to the window to see whether the evening was fine. At that moment Morris Warenne and Jean Grame passed under it, so pleased with each other, and with that Sunday evening in Bloomsbury, that they never saw Helena Charwood. She dropped the curtain with an exclamation.

'Walking the streets on Sunday evening with a young man, like Thompson!' ejaculated Jean's aunt. 'My niece—Alice's girl! Surely the recollection of her mother's family might keep her from that!'

Something told Helena Charwood that her mother's family had not kept Jean from anything else.

'She refused my help. She is evidently a hussy,' said the irate lady to herself as she went up to the drawing-room. 'Who could the man be? Some young shopman, I expect. Well, I could at least have kept her from making a fool of herself. But youth will have its own way nowadays, and modesty and manners have gone together, to say nothing of any duty or obedience to those

whom nature has made—responsible' was the word which shot into Helena Charwood's mind, but she rejected it as unsuitable.

'I will find out where the girl lives,' said her aunt to herself, unfolding a Sunday paper and drinking the coffee at her elbow. She yawned, put down the paper, poked the fire, and went again to the window.

'She has disgraced her mother's people,' she declared, opening a novel that she found dull.

'Jamie,' said Jean, when Jamie sat on the rug in the sky parlour munching a bun and drinking hot sweet cocoa, 'you are not to tell anybody in London where we lived before we came here. You are not to talk about Gairlie. Promise me, laddie. You haven't told anybody about it, have you?'

Jamie looked thoughtful between two bites of bun. Never before had Jean asked him to keep a secret. He searched his memory, but he had forgotten what he had told Mr. Pryme.

'I don't think I've told a body, Jean,' he said solemnly. 'But why mustn't I, lassie?'

'We don't talk about our private affairs in London,' said Jean, rather lamely. 'It's not good manners.'

'Manners are the puzzlingest things in the world,' said Jamie.

'Not if you learn them young enough. That's why it's important,' announced Jean.

Jamie finished his bun, buried his face

in his cocoa, and went to bed with another problem in his tow head. He encountered them daily, but he found them exciting. He hoped he would really remember this one. Jean sat on until the fire went out, and then crept chilled to bed. Her feet were like ice, but her spirit seemed on fire. She had a hard day's work before her, but she tossed from side to side and could not sleep.

It had never crossed her mind for the fraction of a second that Morris Warenne was the man who had turned Jamie and herself out of Gairlie. The sympathy between them warmed Jean's heart as she lay listening to the clocks of Bloomsbury strike; but she shrank, with a feeling which she did not understand, from the thought of discovery.

Morris had said before he left her in Pilgrim Street, 'I shall go down to the north in the early spring.'

'Ah! You will see the colour of it on the western isles then,' she had answered.

But her heart quaked in answering. Would it be necessary for Jamie and his sister to run away a second time before Morris returned to London?

## CHAPTER IX.

### **The Year Goes Out.**

Come to the manger in Bethlehem,  
A sweet Child lies therein;  
A holy Child, come down to earth,  
To save the world from sin—  
A little Child with a heart so large,  
It takes the whole world in.

*Old Carol.*

**P**ERHAPS there is no greater test of a person's spirit than its attitude to Christmas as life goes on. Only cold hearts are old then. Those who have made a feast of it can be lonely or dull. The heart to whom it has always been a festival becomes again a child's heart, whatever its circumstances, and its natural atmosphere is Bethlehem.

In the sedate house in Bulow Place Christmas was not welcome. To Mrs. Charwood it was a nuisance, beginning long before its time, and going to ridiculous lengths. Alfred's hand was for ever in his pocket, and every impertinent errand-boy expected a tip out of all proportion to his size. It was said to be a season of peace and goodwill; but peace was the last thing that it seemed to leave

on the doorstep of two elderly people, who still declared themselves to be in the prime of life, though they knew well that nobody else thought so.

On the evening before Christmas Eve Alfred Charwood and his wife sat alone before their solitary fire. Their larder was stocked with Christmas fare, and a few very expensive cards had been sent out to useful or important acquaintances. No gifts were tied up anywhere in the tall house for expectant small people who were loved there. Nobody whom life had left poor was going to enjoy a hearty meal while blessing the name of Charwood.

Coffee and liqueurs stood on the small round table before the roaring fire. It was a cold night, and Mrs. Helena drew a silk shawl round her shoulders, while Alfred frowned at the windows behind his cigar and his *Star*, and muttered something about draughts.

His wife turned the page of a society journal, and pored over a print of the Duchess of Guisborough opening a bazaar. At that moment there was a scrape of discordant fiddles out in Bulow Place, and three old cracked voices began to sing.

Helena Charwood glanced at the bell at her elbow, but did not ring it.

'The waits!' she exclaimed in an annoyed voice. 'I should really have thought an idiotic custom of that kind would hardly have survived the war.'

'Eh? What?' demanded Alfred sleepily,

sitting up and pouring out coffee. 'Oh, the waits? Belong to Christmas, don't they? Old English idea, don't you know? Dickens and all that—we should miss them, I expect, if they didn't come.'

'Alfred, you are positively maudlin,' declared his wife. 'Ring the bell, and have the creatures sent away.'

Alfred began to fumble in his pocket; but he had changed his clothes before dinner, and had no money. He half rose, and looked towards his wife's desk.

'Shame not to give them something,' he murmured, returning to his cigar.

'If you smoke that cigar to the end, Alfred, you will be ill,' said Mrs. Charwood. 'And will you ring the bell and have those abominable musicians removed. Musicians?—ugh! Oh, my poor ears!'

'I didn't know you were so musical,' said Alfred.

The scraping was less insistent now, and up from the dry frosty street came well-known words, recognized even from old, quavering throats, rising out of rags of woollen scarves:

O come all ye faithful,  
Joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.

The invitation was out of tune. Perhaps that was only to be expected, when it was given in a handsome street where it did not receive in response even the flicker of a blind.



'I suppose I shall have to ring the bell myself,' said Mrs. Charwood.

'No!' suddenly snapped her husband. 'Christmas comes but once a year. Let 'em sing if they want to. I'm sure I've nothing to sing about, and probably they are some unemployed chaps who are fools enough to believe that if they sing for it they may get some supper. I'll ring and send 'em out half-a-crown if you like.'

'I don't like,' said Mrs. Charwood frostily. 'Encouraging beggars—and with all these appeals in the papers for economy. It's excruciating! Christmas? What have we to do with Christmas? Of course the extravagant poor will keep it; but there ought not to be any Christmas kept at all in a miserable year like this.'

'And no Bethlehem either, it seems to me,' grunted Mr. Charwood. 'If I remember rightly, the first Christmas was only kept by the poor.'

Mr. Charwood cut the tip of another and stronger cigar.

'Don't be profane, Alfred,' rebuked his wife, examining a design for a tea-gown, and wondering whether her dressmaker could copy it.

'Profane? I'm not profane, my dear woman,' said her husband. 'You must go somewhere else for that. I meant what I said. It needs a kid or two to make Christmas bearable. I wonder what Alice's girl is doing—and that little lad. He was a good

plucked one. I think you ought to know where they are, Helena. They ought to be coming to us to-morrow, whatever they do for a living.'

Mrs. Charwood stared at her husband as though a strait-jacket would be the most suitable Christmas gift that she could give him.

'I was much too considerate a wife to saddle you with a nursery, Alfred,' she said severely. 'But I never did get any thanks for my pains. And it may surprise you to hear that I do know where my niece is. Thompson informed me a fortnight ago that she is occupied with accounts and selling fancy bags for Christmas in a common little chemist's shop in Conduit Street beyond Russell Square. I think she might have more self-respect than allow such a tale to reach me about my own kin through an impertinent parlourmaid. She and the boy are lodging in Pilgrim Street.'

Mrs. Charwood spoke in a righteous tone from which there was no appeal, and lifted her head in bored patience.

'Humph!' said Alfred. 'That girl has no end of grit. Kept cheerful through it all, I'll be bound, too.'

'If you mean through taking her own headstrong way and disgracing me, I dare say you are right,' remarked his wife.

'If honest work disgraces you, your character is in a bad way,' declared Alfred with rising temper.

‘Don’t be vulgar,’ was the reply.

‘There’s nothing in all London more vulgar than snobbery, especially at Christmas,’ said Alfred. ‘Have you sent them some presents?’

‘It is my intention to take my niece something useful to-morrow. I may include a suitable trifle for the child—something also useful. I am not a mean woman. You should know that, Alfred. It was I, not you, who had an affection for my sister Alice.’

‘Humph! How far does affection stretch?’ asked Alfred. ‘Don’t take a lad in a kilt something useful. There is no future at that age, thank God. And no past either—it’s a lifetime from one Christmas to another. I’ll go down and stop those waits. After all, a man can’t stand much of that row at Christmas. It means too much, and is cheap at half-a-crown. We are a selfish old man and woman, and the waits bring it home to us. The sooner we recognize the fact the better.’

He went downstairs, and opened the hall door. The cracked voices ceased, and there was shuffling of feet as the waits departed, blessing Alfred Charwood. It was the first blessing he had heard for many a long day.

His wife let her paper slip to the floor. She stared into the fire, and rose to her feet.

‘Alfred is ill,’ she said aloud. ‘He has never got over losing that case. He must see a medical man.’

But Mrs. Charwood’s own voice trembled.

To her own stupefied consternation, she heard herself catch her breath in something that bore a distant relationship to a sob.

It was three o'clock on the afternoon of the next day, Christmas Eve, that Mrs. Charwood turned out of Royal Square into Pilgrim Street, and picked her way daintily along that thoroughfare. Children swarmed in the old doorways, playing at every kind of make-believe, and as happy as their kind can be under the queerest as well as the best of circumstances. A small tow-headed lad was conducting an orchestra in a narrow passage; but Mrs. Charwood did not recognize him. She peeped fearfully into open doors, and did not see the old panelled halls and fine proportions which now made the homes of the poor. The narrow street seemed to her sordid and uncomfortable. She was not able to feel the dignity of its past still clinging there.

She paused before No. 8, and looked disdainfully into Ruth's shop window. The little shop was doing a roaring trade in pots and jars and illuminated cards. The words on some of them brought back to Mrs. Charwood the strange feeling of the evening before. She turned away, and rang the bell.

When she was beginning to get impatient, Mrs. Spender suddenly appeared from the basement door, smoothing her black apron, and touching the bow in her hair, and looking prepared for anything. Mrs. Spender was not one to leave Christmas preparations to the last hour, and the basement kitchen was

at that moment its most attractive self, further adorned by a coloured almanac, and a long red paper chain, the handiwork of Jamie Grame.

'Good afternoon, my good woman,' began Mrs. Charwood somewhat hurriedly. She was much the more flustered of the two.

'If it's Miss Robhart's shop yer wantin',' said Mrs. Spender, 'it's the door on the left.'

'No, no—I—er—understand that a young —er—lady lodges here whom I wish to see. Miss Grame—is she at home?'

Mrs. Spender clasped her clean wiry hands, and looked at her caller. She wondered what she wanted.

'I 'ave not been h'authorized by Miss Grame to admit any lady,' she said slowly. 'You might say she lodges 'ere, and then agine yer might say something quite different. She h'occupies the h'attics, in a manner o' speakin', that is, she does for 'erself and 'er little brother in 'em, and right pretty she's made 'em. Miss Grame is a business young lidy, and h'out at this hour, madam.'

Mrs. Charwood shuddered, and Mrs. Spender observed the shudder.

'Yer'd find 'er if so be as yer went round the corner—be'ind the three coloured bottles in Mr. Magson's chemist's shop. She's 'is right 'and. He telled me so this very mornin' when I took 'im up his daily rasher. But they'll be busy, ter-morrer bein' Christmas Eve. Still, Miss Grame'd see yer. A reel lidy she is, and anybody'd know it, though

she do 'ave ter black her own boots and the kiddie's too. For that matter, in my opinion, there isn't many as is fit ter black Miss Grame's boots. She'd better do 'er own.'

'You have a good deal to say, my good woman,' put in Mrs. Charwood.

'Well, I'm sayin' it on my own doorstep,' replied Mrs. Spender, leaning against the lintel.

'Miss Grame is my niece,' began Aunt Helena, glancing rather uncomfortably away from the straight, rather downright eyes, accustomed to defend their owner from a hard world.

'Yer don't s'y so!' ejaculated Jean's landlady. 'And I believe she favours you a bit. You'll be from the country? Won't yer come in, and 'ave a cup o' tea? My place is clean, though it is a bit underground. But then it's quiet and cosy, and I 'ave it to myself. Miss Grame's goin' to run in about five or so, and 'ave a cup 'erself; for they are working late this week. O' course it's Christmas, and Conduit Street ain't Bond Street. They shop after dark round hereabouts.'

'I am not from the country,' said Mrs. Charwood. 'I live in Bulow Place. Perhaps you will kindly give this parcel to my——'

'What!' broke in Mrs. Spender. 'You are not 'er—that 'eathen (for I won't call 'er a Christian woman) as turned a gal from 'er door to go the Lord knows where in London, only He sent 'er down Pilgrim Street? Thank 'Eaven, we don't do them things in this 'ere locality, and Miss Jean ain't the first angel



as we've entertained unawares. In fac', I expect yer don't never entertain angels any other ways. Yer won't 'ave many a-visitin' yer in your street, I h'expect'.

'My good woman, you forget yourself,' said Mrs. Charwood, with a red spot on either cheek. 'I am Mrs. Alfred Charwood. Have the goodness to tell my niece that I have called, and that she shall hear from me later in the day. I wish her to eat her Christmas dinner in Bulow Place—and to bring the boy. Tell her that, and do not forget.'

Aunt Helena gained courage as she spoke. She turned to go, with the large soft parcel still in her hand.

'I don't forget easy,' replied Mrs. Spender; 'neither myself, nor messages. But I'm afraid yer' goin' ter be disappointed; for Miss Grame and the little lad have h'already accepted a previous invitation. Mr. Magson goes to 'is wealthy cousin's on Christmas Day. H'it's a standing engagement. But Miss Robhart and your niece, and the little un and me, we're goin' ter 'ave our dinner cosy together in the basement kitchen, and then sit round Miss Grame's attic fire with chestnuts and oranges, and maybe a cracker or two. We shall all be tired after ter-morrer's rush, and there's presents in the 'ouse for Jamie. It's been arranged for a fortnight. Yer can't upset things like that at the last minute, beggin' your pardon, ma'am. Yer think me bold, and it's not my character in Brunswick nor Royal Square. H'everybody in the boardin'



'ouse where I works reglar 'as a pleasant word for Mrs. Spender, and there's some queer 'uns in the squares at times, I can tell yer.'

'Then you will tell Miss Grame?' put in Aunt Helena again, this time in a more exasperated tone still.

'Lor', yes, mum, I'll tell her,' said Mrs. Spender in her most urbane voice. 'But Miss Jean, she's a reel lidy. She would never go for to let down another lidy. The reel kind never does; and working among all sorts, as I do, I *know*. I'll wish yer good artemnoon, mum. I think as my kettle must be boilin' itself dry.'

The honours were with Mrs. Spender as she almost minced back down the basement stairs.

'Mph! The baggage!' was all that she ejaculated as she spread a clean cloth and opened a new pot of jam.

Mrs. Charwood stood for a second on the doorstep, and then opened the door into Ruth's shop with a hand that caused the small bell to tinkle as though it had suddenly forgotten its usual decorum. Christmas shoppers had gone home to tea, or were thronging the little teashops in that quarter. Ruth was alone for a minute tidying her stock, and flushed with the success of her sales.

'I could hardly part with that big gun-metal coloured jug,' she was saying aloud. 'That's the worst of selling lovely things—or the best. You simply can't be commercial.'

Ruth straightened a wooden model of the

stable at Bethlehem, which a longing child had fingered, and turned hastily as her shop bell gave tokens of madness. She recognized Mrs. Charwood, but made no sign.

'I think Miss Grame lives in this house,' said Aunt Helena with frosty arrogance.

'She does, madam,' returned Ruth.

'I will trust you to give her this parcel,' went on Mrs. Charwood, thrusting the large soft package into Ruth's hand.

It contained a silk petticoat of superior quality which had been a bad speculation of Mrs. Charwood's, and a knitted ball suitable for an infant of one year which she had bought at a charity bazaar. Ruth took the parcel, her face grave.

'I will deliver it to Miss Grame, madam,' was all that she said; and Mrs. Charwood turned from the door, not quite sure whether to be more enraged at the coolly polite young shopwoman or the garrulous 'charlady' of the house.

Jean's aunt walked away up Pilgrim Street, with her long, pronounced nose turned up with a sniff to what she considered the highly unsavoury air. As she approached the corner turning into Royal Square, it was almost blocked by the same red-faced, ragged old waits who had disturbed her the evening before. But here they looked almost jolly, as they scraped their fiddles and invited the little crowd about them to come to Bethlehem. Perhaps it was not such a long way to come as it had been from Bulow Place. Perhaps

the way was easier, and the stable a more familiar goal.

Among the children who stood in a little group on the edge of the pavement was a tow-headed, bare-kneed laddie in a kilt, obviously absorbed in the minstrels. He thought they were raggle-taggle gypsies, and such he loved. He had a dim, childish perception that every seeker has in him a bit of the vagabond, which is a bit of the poet, and never the smallest bit of the snob. And so Jamie walked home to tea with the music floating after him, and he heard all of the melody and none of the squeak. It called him to Bethlehem, and he knew what Christmas meant; while Aunt Helena never saw him as she went home with her nose in the air.

When Jean came home to tea, she found Mrs. Spender sticking a perky spray of holly with five red berries on it into the middle of her little pot of ivy. She was still flushed with conquest, but she said nothing directly about her caller to Jean except to give her Mrs. Charwood's message. Jean looked at her in amazement. The girl was preoccupied. In the pocket of her cretonne overall, which her employer admired beyond any Bond Street creation that ever was fashioned, Jean had a small sheaf of papers. They were the cherished formulæ which had made of her father a dreamer and she supposed a failure. Would they have the same effect on any one else? She almost felt as though the scraps of writing-paper, half sheets, and pages torn

from account-books, held about them some sinister magic which might make a man unfit for common, certainly for business, life. And Mr. Magson would give his secretary no thanks for such an influence as that. Moreover, he might laugh at the little scraps of paper, and throw them aside in contempt as a mad-man's rubbish. But Jean Grame had not yet found that her stout, cheerfully-optimistic employer did anything but treat all her suggestions with respect, and had acted upon quite a number of them. The girl began to be at some moments rather uncomfortably conscious of his eagerness to do so. She was very inexperienced; but it was not what she had been led to expect would happen in a business career. Jean liked Henry Magson, and was only too thankful to be his conscientious, painstaking assistant. With a swift blush, and a denial in her heart of her secret thought, she was very conscious that she never wanted to be anything else. She did not want the little man to pore over those queer hieroglyphics of her father out of kindness to her, and certainly not out of something much more kindly than kindness. She could not make up her mind whether to present the formulæ to her employer as a Christmas gift if he cared to examine them, or to put them back in the top drawer of the old chest which stood in her attic room.

'Yer not eatin' nothin', and it's reel butter on the crumpets, for Christmas,' said Mrs. Spender suddenly. 'Is it yer aunt that's upset

yer? My! A starched-up old ewe dressed lamb-fashion, I calls 'er. Why, at my age—and I'm not that h'old—I'd think twice before I was seed in Brunswick Square in that 'at. If yer'd like to go to Bulow Place for your dinner, dearie, you say so,' concluded Mrs. Spender handsomely. 'Maybe, if yer don't, it'll make a difference to yer aunt's will. Lor', love, I shouldn't like ter stand between you and yer expectations.'

Jean laughed, and forgot the formulae. She helped herself to crumpet and strawberry jam, with a mental vision of an old ewe on the Gairlie hills with its wool starched.

'Don't take back your invitation, please, Mrs. Spender,' she said. 'Jamie and I are so looking forward to it. I am sure that there is no grate in Bulow Place where chestnuts would roast as they do in our attic. And Mr. Magson has given me a great box of chocolates—for Jamie and me. You see, he got some samples from the wholesale place.'

'Humph!' said Mrs. Spender; but she looked suddenly anxious. 'Ah! Hum! He did, did he? Yes! chocolates are nice things for a kiddie. They'll be for Jamie, no doubt. He'll enjoy 'em.'

'Won't you too?' asked Jean.

'Oh, lor', yes; they'll be safe enough with me,' replied Mrs. Spender somewhat enigmatically. 'I'll 'ave a bit o' mistletoe for Christmas Day,' she went on. 'But not beforehand. It's unlucky. It might get inter the

wrong 'ands. But there, who 'ave you to kiss under the mistletoe, my poor lamb—and you with a face like a——'

'Full moon,' added Jean. 'Why, I have Jamie, of course. What better lad could I have than that?'

'Humph!' said Mrs. Spender again. 'Jamie! Yer can kiss 'im without a sprig o' mistletoe for a h'excuse. And there isn't nobody in Pilgrim Street as—leastways!' Mrs. Spender had gone into the scullery to attend to the gas-stove. 'I forgot the corner 'ouse under the red lamp,' she said aloud to herself, and Jean heard her murmur, but only caught the word 'red.' She thought it referred to the big coloured bottle in the chemist's shop, and she had risen to her feet when Mrs. Spender came back.

'Nay, now, sit yer down another minute,' begged the hostess. 'Business won't get brisk while six or so. Miss Grame, yer ought to 'ave a "boy." I wouldn't like as you didn't marry. Lor', to think o' the waste! It'd be wicked—and sometimes I'm not that sure as what I ought ter be, as marriages is made in 'Eaven. Look at some o' them round 'ere. I couldn't think much o' the ways of 'Eaven if they was made there. Seems to me as they orfen wants a leg up like from h'earth.'

'A philosopher like you ought to know,' said Jean, taking up her coat.

'A widder yer mean,' returned Mrs. Spender. 'They knows most things about marriage; and if they don't, they oughter. Some



of 'em can't, though, or they wouldn't be so foolish as ter tike it on agine.'

'And yet you want me to marry!' laughed Jean as she ran upstairs.

'I do,' said Mrs. Spender severely to the kettle. 'And I know who the man is, what's more. Talk about 'Eaven! Well, that marriage would be made there all right—yes, even if I had a finger in the pie myself, though I'm no angel, and not rightly sure that I ever shall be. But, then, I'd cut a poor figger with a 'arp.'

It was very late that night when the shutters went up at the corner shop behind the coloured bottles. Business had been very brisk all the evening, and Jean had left her accounts and got into the swing of it. She was positively proud of the number of black silk bags with gold tassels that she had wrapped up and handed across the counter.

'Yes!' said Mr. Magson proudly. 'Some think it's *infra dig* to sell notepaper and bags when you've a reputation for your prescriptions. But why? Tell me that, will you? People must buy bags. And a medicine-bottle is a lot safer and very much neater inside a tasty little reticule, than slipping from under your arm all the way home, and maybe landing on the doorstep before you do in the end. And I hope, Miss Grame, that you will accept one of the best of those bags as a little Christmas token, after all the extra trouble you have



taken to-day with some very trying customers. I know very well that no salary pays for courtesy.'

'I hope not, Mr. Magson,' said Jean gently. 'It is very kind of you to give me one of your beautiful bags—particularly when you have sent—such splendid chocolates—to Jamie.'

Henry Magson waved his hand; but he was conscious of a very slight chill. Jean was truly courteous; there was, however, at that moment about her something quite gentle, yet infinitely distant, which would have made one or two of her father's old friends smile.

'I—have a very small reminder for you,' went on Jean, with a smile; and Henry forgot the chill. 'I—am ashamed to offer you this, Mr. Magson. It may seem like an impertinence to you.'

'Never—never, Miss Grame!' declared Henry Magson fervently.

'You know—that my father too was a chemist,' said Jean tentatively.

Her employer nodded.

'Not like me,' he said. 'I can't get that formula right yet. I begin to think I never shall.'

'You may—and I thought this might—that is, you know my father was always making experiments. We used to smile at them—Clare and I. He was always on the eve of making his fortune. He was a dear, but he never did it. He said it was because he had no capital, and lived so far from London.

But here are his formulae, or his recipes, or his diagrams, or whatever is the right name. I thought you might perhaps like to look at them—to have them if you found anything worth while. To me of course they are mere scribbles, so you must forgive me if they are so much waste paper to you.'

Henry Magson's face had changed from attentive politeness to interest, and then to eagerness. He put out a hand that almost shook, and took the little yellowing packet from Jean's hand. He glanced over the half sheets of paper hurriedly, then he looked at Jean, drew in his breath, made a sound with his tongue against the roof of his mouth, and turned to the papers again.

'Miss Grame,' he said huskily, 'do I understand that you are giving me these papers?'

'Of course—as a Christmas card,' smiled Jean. 'What else should I do?'

'You could sell them—to the highest bidder. And, if I am not mistaken at a first glance, he would offer a figure which would be beyond me.'

'You may be mistaken,' said Jean kindly. 'And I don't want to sell them, Mr. Magson. Please make any use of them you can.'

It was very late that night before the last light went out in Mr. Magson's shop. He trod on air as he walked back to Pilgrim Street—air with a castle in it. 'I'll make her rich too,' he said aloud, as he found the front door not yet bolted, and saw a light in the basement as he went upstairs.

Mrs. Spender heard him go, and frowned. She went up to fasten her street door, a task that nobody could do to her satisfaction, and she stood for a few seconds on the doorstep looking up at the frosty stars. In the distance she could hear the waits still singing, and then the striking of many a clock ushering in another Christmas Eve. At that moment a familiar figure came along Pilgrim Street, and Richard Pryme paused for a moment as he saw her standing at the door.

'Good-night, Mrs. Spender. A right happy Christmas to you,' he said.

'And the same to you, sir. I'm sure you deserve it, if anybody does hereabouts. I heered of that splendid chair yer sent round for little crippled Nellie Bates, an'——'

'That was the doctor, not me,' said Richard.

'I'm not so sure,' replied Mrs. Spender. 'But, bless him, it's like him too. If I might make so bold, Mr. Pryme, sir, I'd like for to give you an 'int.'

'Your suggestions are always worth hearing,' said Richard seriously.

'Well, it's Christmas Eve, and yer can't 'elp yerself,' sighed Mrs. Spender. 'Yer get thinkin' o' 'nem'ries. And even if he was none such great shakes when yer took 'im, and it were more for worse than better, still at Christmas yer forgets that, and yer think o' the night when yer wore a tartan frock as'd make the gals scream nowadays, an' he give yer a kiss under the mistletoe, for which yer maybe smacked his face, though yer both

liked it. Why don't yer get a wife for Dr. Wrenne, Mr. Pryme?'

'He must get that good thing for himself, Mrs. Spender.'

'Yer'll 'ave ter 'elp him,' said Mrs. Spender sagely. 'I've put up a bit o' mistletoe myself, and it's dangerous. I wish as I could 'ave the commanding o' the kisses.'

'That's a big wish; but I expect you had it once,' said Richard.

'Well, a nod's as good as a wink to a blind 'orse,' replied Mrs. Spender cheerfully. 'And he might go further than my mistletoe, and fare worse.'

'But I daren't tell him so, you know,' said Richard with a smile.

'No—though most young asses wear blinkers,' agreed Mrs. Spender thoughtfully, as she bade Mr. Pryme good-night and bolted the door.

Richard went on through the quiet squares where he liked to prowls at night. The magic of Christmas was on him. Past midnight, in the distance, traffic ceased to rumble. He thought of all the little sleeping children behind the frowsy houses. He pledged himself to make life sweeter and more full of music for some of them before another Christmas came. What else did Christmas mean for an old man, even a very happy one like Richard Pryme?

'And for Morris, please God, a good wife, and perhaps two Christmases hence a bairn of his own.'

Mr. Pryme entered his house with his Yale key. Walking up to the library, he found Morris in his favourite chair fast asleep, with the evening paper lying perilously near the red fire.

'Trust a doctor to be careless,' said Richard, picking up the paper, and then standing still to look down at the younger man as he slept. Morris was tired; he had been up most of the night before, and was going presently to fight death.

'Morris!' the old man admonished the sleeping young one. 'God bless ye, lad, and give ye a good wife and bonnie bairns—a wife like my mother, and she was from the north. But ye're proud, you bairns—what's going to bring ye together? Eh! eh! What was that odd little rhyme I read the other day?—

The world of fools has such a store,  
That he who would not see an ass  
Must stay at home and lock his door  
And break his looking-glass.

And you are an ass, Morris, though a lovable lad.'

'What's that, Richard?' muttered Morris sleepily, sitting up and yawning, and looking at his watch. 'Heavens! I must be off,' he added.

'I was just blethering on, lad, blethering on,' said Richard. 'The old man gets garrulous. A merry Christmas to you, Morris. I suppose you and I will spend it together as usual, if you can spare me a few minutes.

And next Yuletide, my boy, I hope you'll have a wife to bring with you to Royal Square.'

Morris stood for a moment, and then nodded.

'I hope so too, Richard,' he said quietly.

'Thank God, boy,' replied the old man.

## CHAPTER X.

### **Morris Finds Out.**

Yet a thing they say I lack,  
In thy pack—  
Pedlar, tell—  
Hast thou ever a heart to sell?

*Francis Thompson.*

THE almond blossom was out in Bloomsbury. Behind many an old red wall it made fairyland against a blue sky, and the sky that spring was very blue—except perhaps in Bulow Place. It was not far from Easter, which came early, and there was more than a hint of spring in the March air.

Jean Grame came out of the corner shop with the coloured bottles, and turned towards Holborn and Chancery Lane. She was feeling tired. Perhaps, unknown to herself, her courage was wearing a little thin. Jamie was listless and pale, and had no appetite. The extra money from the sale of the old things at Gairlie was all spent somehow, and her own clothes were shabby in the spring sunshine. There was not enough money in the Post Office Savings Bank to buy a pretty frock and a new hat for Jean, and to provide for the summer holiday which she was determined that Jamie should have away from London. It was a long way to Gairlie and



the western isles, and cost a big sum to get there. Jean turned in loathing from the thought of a fortnight at Margate. What were a band and a pier compared to those fairy isles lying in their blue setting under the sky?

Jean sighed, and turned the sigh into a cough. It was spring, the almond blossom was pink, and she was not going to sigh. She was on her way with an important message from Mr. Magson to a wholesale house in the Strand, and he had told her not to come back that day. The little man had been mysterious of late. He had looked at her with some queer sort of significance as he gave her the little packet she was carrying. His face had been flushed, and there was a look of victory in his eyes as he looked at her. In the last few weeks Jean had wondered more than once whether he had made anything of the little sheaf of papers which she had given him at Christmas-time. She had scarcely liked to ask him, for two reasons. She did not want him to think that she attached much importance to her father's uncertain dreams. And she did not want Henry Magson to look at her as he did sometimes if she talked to him with her pleasant spontaneous grace and the friendly sympathy which Jean Grame could not help giving to any living soul who claimed it from her.

Jean felt uneasy as she turned into a little passage out of Holborn and found herself in Lincoln's Inn. It was a favourite place. She

paused on the pavement outside the row of small, old-fashioned, attractive shops at its entrance, where the treasures of other years and long-dead people are for sale. She wished she could forget that look in Mr. Magson's eyes as he watched her walk away from the shop door. And last night, when she and Jamie had taken supper with Richard Pryme and had had a good time in the library, the old man had told her that Morris was going to Gairlie in a fortnight. Richard had thought that he told her so in the most inconsequent casual manner; but Jean had seen something in his eager face that she could not understand. How could it be possible that Richard Pryme knew her secret? She had never spoken the name of Gairlie to him. She had never pursued the subject of her home in the north. And, for an elderly man so interested in human nature and human fortunes, Richard had asked her singularly few questions.

All this came clearly to Jean in an uncomfortable fashion as she stood looking idly into a shop full of old china and miniatures once probably painted for lovers. Jean had not seen Morris lately. A wave of influenza had been sweeping the slums about Pilgrim Street, and he had been working night and day. The girl did not realize that she had missed him. But she suddenly did realize with a start of dismay that the sun came out in Lincoln's Inn when a pleasant voice spoke over her shoulder.

'They are delightful cups, aren't they?' it said. 'You know, I should really like to buy them, Miss Grame, if I hadn't a dingy bachelor's abode and such a sensible house-keeper as Mrs. Duffy. She would do nothing but sniff at those delicate cups.'

'They are dears,' agreed Jean with a slight blush; and the love of the natural house-keeping woman for old china crept into her own voice.

Morris heard it, and he looked again at the pale yellow cups and saucers, with their gay little posies of hand-painted flowers, their trails of fine gold, and their beautiful shape. They seemed emblems of such a safe, serene, remote life for women, among crinolines and curls and quiet old homes where they were taken care of. For a moment Jean wished herself back in the sixties. And Morris would have looked well in a black silk stock and a bright blue coat with steel buttons.

Jean laughed a little.

'Miss Jean,' said Morris suddenly, 'I'm going to buy that china. I—I don't intend always to live by myself in that house under the red lamp in Pilgrim Street. Come in with me and help me to buy it. The thought gives me a holiday sort of feeling, and I jolly well need a holiday. So do you by the look of you. If you have got an hour off, come for a bit of a jaunt somewhere. It's too late for a matinee, but I shall be free until six.'

He put his hand on the shop door, and the old-fashioned doorbell tinkled.



'AH! THEY ARE SO BEAUTIFUL,' SAID THE MAN  
WHO SOLD THEM.



'I have to deliver a very important packet for Mr. Magson to Messrs. Sweere & Miles,' said Jean demurely. 'After that, I am free.'

'Good! I'll go with you,' said Morris like a schoolboy. 'I say, the old boy has been up to something mysterious, hasn't he? Gave me a hint that he was going to cut me out by curing all the ills that flesh is heir to by making old men young again. Ha! Ha! Has he discovered the elixir of life?'

'The essence of youth, perhaps,' said Jean.

'Bless me, yes, that was what he called it.'

'Well, I don't wonder he has discovered that.'

Morris looked at Jean as he opened the shop door, and it was a look not unlike the one that she had seen on the face of Henry Magson that very afternoon; but it made her feel very different. Her heart was beating so loudly as she walked into the shop full of beautiful things, that she was afraid the white-haired man who kept it must have heard. But Monsieur Flore was perhaps accustomed to people who came to his shop together because they did not really like to buy anything apart. He seemed to recognize these two as that kind, when Morris asked to see the cups in the window.

'Ah! They are so beautiful,' said the man who sold them, and who seemed at home among the treasures of his shop. 'See, sir! That so beautiful miniature—is a picture of the lady to whom those cups once belonged in Napoleon's day. That little picture—it went with her lover to the wars—in zose days

the wars against my country—against France. Those old cups—they were ready for a little house in a London square when that square was in the country almost. The lady—she lived in the square, sir, until she died; but she lived there alone—for he nevaire came back from ze wars. Ze small picture came back. Ze cups and saucers—zey were nevaire used save once a year. It is her nephew, her great nephew, who want money, who sell me zese things. You will not regret it if you buy—you, and madame, sir.'

Jean did not hear his last word. She was looking at the miniature—the oval face, with wide blue eyes like her own, and curly brown hair, and a smile that meant gaiety and a frank heart more than beauty. The modern girl could see the old house and the sheltered life in the square, where probably now typists and journalists fought against odds for a living or a name. Ah! but it must have been lonely in those stately old days—and dull. But Jean had been dull earlier that day. Well, she was not dull now, and she did not ask herself the reason.

'I'll buy the tea set,' said Morris briefly. 'Please send it to this address in Royal Square. It will be kept for me there.'

The old Frenchman bowed and smiled, as though he was glad to get a good home for his cups and saucers. Then he bowed to Jean, and he spoke very clearly.

'Madame will enjoy her tea from these cups,' he said. 'And she will not drink



it in loneliness like the lady whose lover went to the war. No, by the grace of God, our war is over, and the lovers who are left have come home again.'

Jean wandered to an old corner cupboard and looked into it. Her cheeks were like the roses on the old cups. Possibly the urbane French shopkeeper might think her ungracious, but that she could not help. At that moment she wished herself back behind the three coloured bottles, and Morris Warenne anywhere except buying cups and saucers at her side, with an embarrassing old man misunderstanding them both.

'I'll take the miniature too,' she heard Morris say in a rather loud voice, which suppressed something horribly like laughter.

How could Morris laugh? Moreover, he turned to her quite easily and held open the shop door, smiling down at her, with the little shabby leather case in his hand.

'Quaint old boy, isn't he?' said Dr. Warenne as they strolled up Lincoln's Inn in the sunshine. 'I was obliged to buy the miniature.' I couldn't separate it from the cups and saucers, could I? Not after that story, and all those years—and of course I haven't any use for a pathetic little miniature set round with tiny pearls. You'll relieve me of its care, won't you? If Richard takes care of the tea-things, you will accept the lady herself, won't you, Miss Grame?'

Jean stopped short under the trees, among the old leisurely buildings.

'But—that would be separating them, Dr. Warenne,' she said.

Morris hesitated. He had wanted to ask Jean Grame to marry him since Christmas. He had seen her only at odd minutes, or when they were with Mr. Pryme or Jamie. And now he could scarcely ask her such a question on the edge of the pavement in Lincoln's Inn in the middle of a March afternoon. He wished she would ask him up to her sky parlour. But she had not done so.

The two walked on very slowly. People jostled and passed them without an idea that they had reached one of the decisive moments of their lives. Morris looked down steadily at his companion. Those sweet old words of Ben Jonson came suddenly to his memory:

Give me a look, give me a face,  
That makes simplicity a grace.

He meant to have such a face opposite, close to his own for the rest of their lives; and Morris generally got what he wanted, apart from his uncle's fortune. But he knew that a fortune could not buy this girl at his side.

'I hope it would not separate them,' he said clearly. 'I don't intend that it should—Miss Jean.'

She heard him, and glanced at him for a second. He was looking grave now; but she caught something in his face that made her want to give him what he asked, if he should ever ask her for it. And from his last words she knew that he would. But she could think of nothing to say. Happiness is shy,

and Jean was shy then, though a great surge of happiness was flooding Kingsway with a wonderful light that did not come from the March sunshine. Crowds came between Morris and Jean, and there was no chance to talk. They turned into the Strand, and through a network of streets walked to the wholesale chemist's warehouse where Jean's errand had to be done.

Morris waited for her as she ran up to the office; and if her soul had not been absorbed in him and the magic of this afternoon in quite ordinary streets, she might have been struck with the eagerness of the man who received the little packet and the manner of his thanks to Mr. Magson. As it was, she noticed neither, and forgot both, before she was down the stairs again and out in the street of high narrow business places.

'Shall we go down through the Adelphi to the Thames?' asked Morris. 'It's always quiet there, and I love those little stately streets that belong to the eighteenth century. I want a little house there, one with Adams fireplaces and a garland round the ceiling. How would you like it?'

'A man with a fortune can get most things of that kind,' said Jean lightly, ignoring the question.

'I'm beginning to think that he can't get anything that he really wants,' replied Morris ruefully. 'Time, for instance, and that little house of which I spoke. If I bought it, I couldn't turn the people out. Romance goes

with poverty, it seems to me. The man who has had wealth thrust on him walks alone. But I don't mean to. I want—something very much.'

'A rich man is supposed to be able to get anything that he wants,' said Jean hurriedly.

'That's a fallacy. Miss Jean——'

'Yes!'

'Next week I am going away.'

'For a holiday? I hope you will enjoy it very much.'

They had turned out of John Street now, and were walking towards the river. The narrow thoroughfare was very quiet. Not even the hum of London came here.

'I am going to Gairlie,' said Morris suddenly. 'That place I have up north, you know. I have not even seen it yet, and Richard thinks I ought to. Personally I am not keen. What have I to do with the western isles? I am a Londoner first, last, and always, and my patients are my people, not those crofters or whatever they are round an old shooting-box at Gairlie.'

'They are not crofters--oh! Gairlie!'

It was a cry that came from a tired heart for something that belonged to itself. The old grey house, the miles of moorland where the curlew called, and the far mysterious islands swept up on Jean's horizon. The black Thames seemed an alien thing. Jean's high heart failed her and ached for Gairlie. She could not help that cry. But quite suddenly it stabbed Morris. In a flash knowledge came to him which had been hovering on the

horizon of his consciousness for longer than he knew. He stood still at the corner of that beautiful terrace above the river where long ago London lovers must have lingered, and he almost knew Jean's secret. As the knowledge swept over him he wondered how he could have been so great a fool as not to have guessed it before.

'Of course, that was what Richard meant when he said I must break my looking-glass if I would not see an ass,' reflected Morris. 'Of course the old man knows—and Jean knows. And if I come back from Gairlie and ask her to marry me, she will think it is because I am trying to make up to her for what she has lost. Will she? Surely she knows that I love her! And yet—we have not really been much together, worse luck. I won't risk it. I'll ask her now.'

'Jean—Miss Grame,' he said awkwardly, 'do you—you sounded as though you knew Gairlie—as though you had some affection for the place.'

'I told you that I knew it,' said Jean breathlessly.

'And I don't,' replied Morris.

Silence fell between them. They had reached the end of the long terrace, and Morris turned. Lights were appearing in beautiful old rooms. Offices were dark and forsaken.

'I don't think,' said Jean nervously and slowly, 'that a stranger could ever really know Gairlie. Even I—only know it superficially—

that is, I mean the beautiful country round. I was born in London lodgings. But Jamie, on his mother's side, Jamie has Stuart blood in his veins. Little lad as he is, he loves that countryside differently from me, though I long for it in this spring weather.'

'Jean? You were born in London lodgings—maybe in a frowsy London street—like myself?' cried Morris.

'I expect it was,' laughed Jean, getting back her courage.

Morris stood still. A little moon was showing over the black water and the distant grimy bridges. Nobody was in sight along the front of the quiet terrace. Morris suddenly spoke rapidly.

'My work lies in London,' he said. 'Jean—will you marry me? Marry me, and go north with me, at Easter. Show me the place that you love, but which maybe I can never understand. I want you very much—oh, you must know that. I am a plain man, and I go to the point, but I—love you, Jean.'

'Oh, oh—Dr. Warene,' said Jean with distress in her voice. 'I wish—I wish you hadn't.'

'Why, my dear?' Morris was chilled and set back; but in the dusk there was something in Jean's eyes which was not in her voice.

'Because—there are reasons—Jamie—oh, and other things—other people—why, I can't possibly do as you ask. Oh, how could I go back to Gairlie with you?'

Jean half turned from him. She was filled

with distress, and yet longing was in her heart too—a longing that she could not analyse, for she had never taken to pieces her happiness with Morris.

‘He is so kind,’ she said to herself. ‘It is just because that old man in the shop said things. And oh, it would be like asking for Gairlie back again.’

‘Dr. Warenne,’ she said quietly, but with herself under command, ‘I am—not at liberty to listen to you. And you—must go to see your place in the north unhampered.’

‘Unhampered?’ Morris frowned.

For a moment a horrible chill crept up his spine. Could it be possible that Jean Grame, bonnie, brave, independent Jean, could have given her word to Henry Magson, who obviously admired her? Perhaps for the sake of Jamie. No! If she had, she would not be speaking as she was to Morris.

‘And yet,’ said Morris’s heart, ‘who would not want her who saw her?’

‘I’m sorry,’ said Jean gently. ‘I meant free.’

‘I don’t want to be free,’ said Morris. ‘I want you. I will help you to care for Jamie—he is worth it for his own sake, and he will make his way. He shall go to a better school, and——’

‘Don’t,’ said Jean. ‘I hope—in any case he can do that.’

She was thinking of the formulæ, but Morris misunderstood her.

‘Surely that little bounder——’ he said to himself unfairly.



'You are very proud,' said Morris with a touch of bitterness.

Jean looked at him as if she feared to lose a friend more than a lover.

'Oh, I don't think it's that,' she said. 'I don't mean it to be. But——'

'Never mind,' said Morris. 'I won't worry you, dear. I had to tell you before I went away. I won't promise not to do it again, but I'll try not to startle you next time. I'm an awkward, clumsy fellow—the old man would say so—as well as an ass.'

'Don't call yourself names. The kindest people in the world live in Bloomsbury,' said Jean, with a little but rather wan smile.

They had turned back from the river up the little streets again, and to both the magic of the day had not exactly flown, but gone out of sight. A chill wind had risen to say that it was only March. They were back in the Strand, and daffodils at the corner were withering at their edges.

The sympathy between the two was broken for the moment, but it had not gone. Morris turned to Jean. A look came into his eyes which meant that he was not going to let anything fade or char the edge of his dream. He was going to make it into reality in London streets, and for every day, not for the blue air above the western isles. He was a reckless adventurer, and everybody was young, and the lights would soon be lit, and he must have Jean. Unless—

In the Strand she held out her hand,

‘I must go home now,’ she said.

‘But we have not had tea!’ exclaimed Morris. ‘We were out for a holiday.’

‘They don’t always turn out—just as one expects.’

‘No, they are disappointing things. I prefer work, and everyday.’

‘I think I do too. But I must go back to Jamie now. He will be at home from school; and if he didn’t find me, he might set out to look for me. And Jamie has been very good lately. He has not been once after the raggletaggle gypsies, I think. He must be forgetting the Highlands after all, though he cares not a jot if the laddies laugh at his kilt.’

‘Happy lad! He had need be free from care with his privileges,’ said Dr. Warrene, looking into the straight sweet face that was raised to his.

His words and his own face still held his tale, and Jean’s eyes fell. What would happen when kindly Mrs. Anderson talked about her and Jamie, as of course she would?

‘Oh, if only we hadn’t come from Gairlie!’ said Jean to herself. ‘But I’ll never take his money, and I’m terrified of what he will offer me when he knows. And—and——’

‘Good-bye, Dr. Warrene,’ was all that she quietly said. ‘I hope you will have a good time—in the north.’

‘Shan’t I see you before I go?’ demanded Morris ruefully.

‘I think not. I am very busy just now; and next week Jamie has his holidays.’

'That lucky chap; but his day won't last for ever,' said Morris. 'Miss Jean, when I return from Gairlie, may I come to see you in your sky parlour? I want to very much. Jamie has told me about it.'

'The laddie must be blethering,' put in Jean.

'It is very charming blether. May I come, when I get home again?'

'Please do not ask me that now,' said Jean, unable to think of any excuse, and too direct to manufacture one. . . .

Jean forgot to take any kind of vehicle, and walked back to Pilgrim Street without seeing anything or anybody on her way. The spring was gone from the air. It was the bleakest, dullest March of any year. She turned into the narrow old street with a stone in her breast, seeing only the broken-down passages, the spoiled panelling, the sordid frowsiness, and dirty children. Morris Warenne was going to Gairlie. He would have taken her with him, and oh! she wanted to go. She wanted to go anywhere with him, everywhere with him, never to leave him again as long as they two should live. He could not understand why she would not go. And, of course, he would not come back again; he was not that kind. But it was inevitable, irrevocable; knowing all about him, she had no choice but to send him away. Life was very drear that day in Bloomsbury. And Jean was tired of the little office behind the coloured bottles and of the kindly, garrulous little man who employed her.

For the first time in his life Jamie found his sister a dull companion over that week-end. She would not go with him to see Mr. Pryme, and so he went alone. To his appalled consternation, he saw tears on her face when she raised her head from the prayers at church next morning. The story that she read to him in the afternoon was even not interesting. Jamie felt inclined to go off with the raggle-taggle gypsies, and he thought that he had forgotten all about them.

'I wish we was at Gairlie,' he said suddenly on that Sunday night when Jean was putting him to bed.

'Why, laddie? I thought you had almost forgotten Gairlie,' said Jean, though she looked startled.

'Forgotten Gairlie? I'm going right there when I'm a man. I'm a Hielander, lassie. I'm to have a braw farm on the braes, and a hundred head o' sheep. Jock Anderson's to be my mon, ye ken,' declared Jamie. 'Nay, nay, lassie—and I'll be awa wi' the gypsies then whenever I will. Maybe I'll marry a gypsy chield.'

Jean laughed, and carried him off to bed and tucked him up.

'I wish you could go now, bairnie,' she said. 'Your wee face is pale and your legs are thin.'

'Hoots! I'd like fine ain o' Mrs. Anderson's wee bonnie scones,' muttered the little boy as he fell asleep and paddled in a brown Scottish burnie in his dreams.

When Jean went to her work on Monday

morning, she was conscious of a feeling of some suppressed excitement behind the coloured bottles. Mr. Magson was already there, and he met her with a broad smile, rubbing his hands together with satisfaction.

'It's my birthday,' he said.

'Very many happy returns to you,' said Jean cordially.

'Aye, aye, Miss Grame, I have reason to think that they will be so. I believe that I shall own my car yet—and not a two-seater either—though there are worse things in life than going through it in a two-seater with a chosen companion. Eh—eh? What?'

'Indeed, yes,' said Jean, dusting the office desk, and getting out her accounts.

'I have been positively bursting to tell you,' went on Henry Magson confidentially. 'But I was not sure until last week. Even now I can scarcely believe it. And all owing to you—all owing to you.'

'To me? What are you talking about, Mr. Magson?' cried Jean, looking at him in amazement.

'Why, the formulae—your father's recipes—the Essence of Youth! The name alone would sell it, but the stuff is worth its weight in diamonds. Our fortunes are made—mine, that of the wholesale house which is going in with me for the manufacture and advertisement of the goods—and yours, my dear Miss Grame. We shall have a place in Bond Street by this time next year. We shall rival, nay, we shall overtop Boots Limited. No firm in the

country has a proprietary article to touch that Essence of your father's. It'll make its millions—and Magson's is going to do the trick.'

Henry Magson paused for breath; and Jean stared at him, unbelieving, and then with a swift joy in her face.

'I'm so glad the papers are of use,' she said. 'I hated giving you what was possibly rubbish, and——'

'Rubbish!' cried Mr. Magson. 'A diamond-mine is rubbish in comparison. Every slip of paper contained an invaluable secret. Your father was a genius. I wish I might have shaken him by the hand.'

'Poor dear—nobody ever thought so,' said Jean dreamily. 'He was like Jamie, fond of the raggle-taggle gypsies. Yes, he did know some secrets, but not the kind that make money.'

'Money makes money!' declared Henry pompously. 'But we shall soon have plenty of that. Young Jamie shall become a scholar—Eton—Oxford—the Bar—anything—will be possible for that youth out of his father's secret.'

'Ah, it is sweet of you to think of Jamie,' said Jean. 'But you will be disappointed. He told me last night that he wanted to be a sheep-farmer in the Highlands.'

'Then, bless him, he shall be!' shouted the exultant little chemist. 'The money is much more yours and his than mine—and, Miss Jean, will you come out to lunch with me? We can't leave business to go up West, but I think we might manage the Holborn

Restaurant. We'll lock the door, and chance the customers.'

'Surely,' said Jean cordially, 'if I may go home and get my best hat.'

'That is a very becoming one—but of course, of course,' agreed Mr. Magson, turning to the counter as a ragged child came in for a bottle of cough mixture.

He gave her a paper of sweets into the bargain, and she went home amazed. To him it seemed a very long morning; but at last he walked by Jean's side in the noonday sun, and found himself opposite to her at a small white table, where he ordered the best that the famous place could produce. And when coffee was placed on the table, Henry Magson, there, in the gay, popular restaurant, leaned his hands on the white cloth, and, looking at the girl opposite, asked her quietly, and not without dignity, to help him to spend the fortune by becoming his wife.

Jean was not surprised, but she was very, very sorry. She did not want to hurt him, for he had been good to her. He had given her work and hope; and who can do more? But there was no turbulence in her being, no wild tumult of longing and sudden happiness and fathomless misery in her heart. She only sought for words that would give him as little pain as possible when she refused him.

'Well, I didn't feel anything like sure,' he said humbly. 'Was it likely that I should—a lovely lady like yourself? I would have taken Jamie—he should have been like my



own, for he's a boy worth having for his own sake. Well! well! good-bye, Miss Jean. Don't come back to business this afternoon. I'd rather be alone; but by to-morrow morning—why, I promise you that I won't give any further trouble if you'll let bygones be bygones, and share the cash that comes from the Essence of Youth, because it's yours.'

As Jean walked slowly and rather drearily home, she thought that, after all, Henry Magson, short, stout, fussy, and ginger-haired, was not so far removed from 'a very gentle, parfait knight.'

'And they both wanted Jamie,' said the girl to herself. 'Perhaps it was to get him that they asked me,' she smiled, and her smile was not wholly sad as she spoke.

'Richard,' said Morris that night, as the two puffed at their pipes, and after half an hour's silence, 'have you any theory about that girl who lived in the old place up at Gairlie?'

'I've theories of sorts about most things,' said Richard.

'That's no reply,' declared Morris, almost with a touch of irritation. 'I'm ashamed of myself that I have not found that girl. And I have a sort of feeling that you may have done a bit of exploring on your own. I know your blessedly interfering old ways.'

'For a regular scandal-mongering, mischief-making old fusspot like myself, I have had singularly little success,' said Richard cheer-

fully. 'But my opinion, Morris, is that when you come back from Gairlie, you will know the truth about the lass you ousted, as you choose to consider it.'

'I'm sure she isn't there,' said Morris.

'There! Of course not, I expect she is under your nose. Things mostly are,' pronounced Richard. 'You will, I expect, come back, and wonder why you didn't pick this one up, perhaps on your own doorstep.'

'Among my patients, do you mean?' asked Morris.

'Take the night-train from Euston, and you may find out—if you have the sense of a bairn to say two and two make four.'

'Only bairns know that,' said Morris. 'It's a thing that we are never sure of, when we have once left childhood.'

'Until we reach our second childhood,' added Richard placidly. 'And I'm glad to say I'm there. You may find something even better than childhood among your islands.'

'Well! It is where magic opens one's eyes,' laughed Morris. 'And I promise you that I'll take the first night-train that I can possibly catch.'

'Good!' said Richard Pryme. 'I'll be at the station to meet you when you come back.'

## CHAPTER XI.

### Up North.

In the Highlands, in the country places,  
Where the old plain men have rosy faces,  
And the young fair maidens  
Quiet eyes.

*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

‘**N**A! Na! I’m none so sure that I shall mak’ a bakin’ o’ my bonnie scones for sic a foreigner,’ said Mrs. Anderson, rubbing her spectacles, and looking down at Morris’s letter, which lay on her knee. ‘Tis a fine wee letter,’ put in Jock, smoking his pipe in the inglenook. ‘Yon new laird is an honest man, woman.’

‘Hoots! Words is easy,’ returned Mrs. Anderson. ‘He’s from London. Yon’s a gey wicked spot, and nae good comes o’ gaein’ there. Luik at the last letter I had from Miss Jean, bonnie lassie. She bid me tell naebody what her bit address was, and she said Jamie had grawn oot on’s kilts and was thin-like. Puir bairns! And for why is Miss Jean not in the auld hoosie to welcome the laird hersel? Then a thing might happen. ’Tis her richt to be there.’

‘Losh, woman, how ye clash,’ remarked Jock easily, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe and went out to look at his cōw.

Curiosity was not his strong point; but he

knew well that his wife would be up with the lark next day, making the old house of Gairlie ready for the owner. So far he had only communicated through a lawyer, whom Mrs. Anderson instinctively disliked. And now he was to bear down upon her for Easter. 'Morris Warenne!' Mrs. Anderson ruminated upon his signature. In spite of herself she liked the sound and the look of it.

The room which had been Francis Grame's study looked shabbily cheerful about four o'clock on the next day. Mrs. Anderson had gathered together a few old chairs and a solid table from the dismantled rooms, and the old bureau belonged to the place, so had been scrupulously left in its corner by Jean. There was a bunch of daffodils on the mantelpiece, and a bowl of snowdrops on the desk. Mrs. Anderson's thoughts were full of Jean as she threw another log on to the fire, and glanced through the window for the dogcart which Jock had taken to the station.

'This room belongs to the Grames,' said Mrs. Anderson aloud, trying to make it look as Jean had made it.

With its white cloth on the tea-table, its heaped scones, and ham, and new-laid eggs, it was a pleasant sight to any tired hungry Londoner. Delight struggled with surprise in Morris's face, as the ramshackle old cart stopped in front of the door, and he saw the turrets, and the firelight, and then the cosy, sparsely-furnished room. It was just such a room as Morris Warenne liked best.

He came in out of the keen March air, rubbing his hands together, and with a very pleasant handshake for Mrs. Anderson. He looked at her with his shrewd, kindly, penetrating doctor's eyes, and she forgot that she had ever regarded him as a shameless fortune-hunter. But more than ever Mrs. Anderson felt angry with fate that Jean Grame was not standing on the faded old rug beside her.

Morris too was suddenly possessed by the feeling of Jean's nearness. He did not seek to understand it. He was just satisfied to feel it, and not to ask whence it came. At that moment, in her sky parlour, Jean was following him from the station in the old cart, and seeing him in this familiar room with Mrs. Anderson; but neither of its occupants had a glint of that.

'Ech, sir, but I'm pleased!' cried the outspoken wife of the factor of Morris's land.

'I'm pleased too, Mrs. Anderson,' said Morris, to his own surprise. 'But what specially pleases you?'

'Why, tae see that ye're a richt sensible chield as might ha' grown here,' said the woman. 'And none o' yer fine London gentleman, as was Mr. Eustace hisself. Many's the time I've said to my mon, Jock, as probably ye was like him but a wors 'un o' the same stock. An' ye luik a sensible man body juist like ane o' oorsel's.'

'I'm a hard-working doctor glad of a holiday,' said Morris cheerfully; 'and at this minute very hungry. There's not much of

the fine gentleman about me, as my house-keeper, a canny Scots body like yourself, would soon tell ye. I've been poor most of my life. I never expected to inherit my uncle's fortune; and, what's more, Mrs. Anderson, so far I can't say that it has brought me either luck or pleasure. Until this moment I've wished he had left it somewhere else. But this old room does please me. And it looks as though it had been lived in.'

'Lived in!' cried Mrs. Anderson. 'And forbye what else should it be? It's been lived in, and worked in, and laughed in, and cried in, until yon day last September, when we lost the lassie. Eh, losh! Lived in, forbye! But I'll fetch ye're tea across. I ken ye must be starvin', and the ham's home-cured and good.'

'It looks both,' said Morris heartily.

He went up to the turret chamber, with its thick walls, and fine views from the round windows of the distant isles and the stretching coast below his own cliffs. After Bloomsbury, a great quiet seemed to possess the whole earth and his own soul. Morris was in a very receptive mood when he went down again to Francis Grame's study and attacked his supper. He seemed to be alone in the old house; for there was no sound anywhere except the crackling of a log and the scamper of an odd mouse in the wainscot.

'Ye'll ha' been in the war, sir?' inquired Mrs. Anderson rather severely when she came to clear the table.

'I was through it all—in the R.A.M.C.,' said Morris.

'Losh! But ye ought to ha' been in the Camerons. There should ha' been a kilt alang o' yer khaki,' declared the Scotswoman.

'I was in the London-Scottish,' laughed Morris. 'You see I didn't forget one side o' my blood. It gave me a mother who was one of the best.'

'And ye've come hame to the land she loved. We've a proverb that says, "Evening brings all hame"; but it's none night with ye yet, laddie. Eh, but why ha' ye never found Miss Jean, and sent her back or brought her wi' ye? I've aye thocht she had mair richt to the place than yersel', though I'm a Scot, and I believe in the claim o' blood. She's in London forbye, though I am no' to tell her bit address, and I canna learn why.'

Morris was filling his pipe on the hearth. He turned to Mrs. Anderson and stared at her. A sudden illumination leapt into a broad light somewhere in his understanding. He put down the pipe unlit.

'Mrs. Anderson,' he began; but that bustling woman was already at the door.

'I hope as ye won't be lonesome, sir,' she said. 'Jock, my mon, is goin' to sleep ben in the kitchen, in case ye should want aught durin' the nicht. He's a shy mon is Jock, but honest. He has a bit account to render ye, and maybe ye would let him step in afore bedtime to speak wi' ye aboot the place. An' what will ye have hot afore ye gang to



yer bed? 'Tis cauld yet, when the sun goes down.'

'Don't let Jock sleep out of his own bed for me, Mrs. Anderson,' said Morris. 'I am a man who often has to leave his own just after turning in when the telephone rings. I don't need anybody on the premises. Just let Jock bring me some hot water in the morning, and give me a cry when breakfast is ready.'

'Na! Na!' expostulated Mrs. Anderson.

'And I will come across and smoke a pipe with your husband,' went on Morris. 'And you can make me some coffee in your kitchen, and drink a cup with me. I haven't much time, and I want to get to know my neighbours hereabout. I'm a sociable man in Central London, with lots of friends.'

'Mercy!' said Mrs. Anderson, as she went back across the cobbled yard to her own kitchen. 'The lad is no more like Mr. Eustace than I am. He's his mother over again, praises bel with a friendly word for all the world. Eh, but why isna Miss Jean here? And he would ha' done his part for Jamie. And them two in London, and him not come across them. It must be an awful biggish toon.'

Left alone, Morris stood on the hearth in the firelight, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, looked out over darkening land and sea. It seemed to him that he had indeed reached the magic islands. He heard their music, not that of sirens, but the clear singing

of the maid of his heart, who ought to be there by his side. Any depression that had come with Morris Warenne from London was swept away. A great exultation seized him. He knew why Jean Grame had refused to marry him. Tenderness filled his eyes, as he turned up the lamp, placed it on the big, scarred oak desk, and turned back the flap to examine the shabby but beautiful thing. As he did so with a clatter, evidently he had touched some secret spring. A little square of paper fluttered to the ground from a small drawer at the back of the desk. Morris picked it up. It was an unmounted photograph, taken by an amateur, but a clear print. And it was a picture of Jean Grame, as a schoolgirl, sitting on the edge of a heathery cliff, and clasping inside one arm the solemn-eyed, tow-headed baby Jamie. As Morris looked at the little picture he was not ashamed of the mist that came before his eyes.

‘Bless her, my bonnie Jean,’ he said from the bottom of his heart. ‘For she is going to be mine—big-hearted, deep-souled Jean, who would never take happiness or anything else for herself if it meant for herself only. When the laddie grows up, he shall have Gairlie if he still wants to be a sheep-farmer. My work and Jean’s will always lie in London.’

A few papers were hidden in the old desk. Perhaps Jean had forgotten them. Maybe she had thrown them down on the empty hearth last autumn, and Mrs. Anderson had carefully gathered them up again. Morris

glanced through them, but he felt that he was looking into something sacred. He did not need to read them to be able to find Jean Grame; but their torn fragments as he put them back in the desk, told him many things about a sweet nature, a brave fight, and an inconsequent man who had leaned on his womenkind, and yet tried to do his best with his one power and his unmarketable knowledge.

It was eight o'clock when Morris strolled across to Jock Anderson's cottage. He was pleased with his inheritance, he needed a holiday, but he was strongly inclined to take the next night's express back to London.

'No! I will give her time. Maybe she's in a panic to-night for fear of what I have discovered.' He laughed softly. 'Bonnie wee thing,' he said aloud, adopting the language of Scotland, and forgetting the inches of brave-hearted Jean Grame.

'Now then, sir, sit here, sir. It's proud that we are,' began Mrs. Anderson, shaking up the patchwork cushion on her wooden arm-chair, while Jock rose from the settle and stood awkwardly before his new master.

His wife made signals to him to show his manners, but Jock never saw them.

'I mind your mother, laird,' was all he said. 'She was a bonnie, canty leddy. I was in London once, and I saw her. She was a sad-like body then, and yon southern toon—it's a bold, bad, cauld spot.'

'Na, na, Jock; ye dinna ken what

ye're sayin',' put in his wife. 'The doctor's a London gentleman.'

Morris laughed. It was strange to be addressed as a laird, and he did not much appreciate it. He would rather be the busy doctor of Conduit Street and Pilgrim Street corner than either a country magnate or a fine gentleman about town.

'I'm a plain man,' he said, 'and a working man.' He shook hands with Jock warmly. 'It was good of you to go and see my mother. She must have been glad of a friend's face, for London was not home to her.'

'No! She was like Miss Jean,' said Mrs. Anderson hurriedly. 'She belonged to us in the north. Eh, Dr. Warrene, sir, couldna ye find yon bit lassie, and tell me what she's doin'? And wee Jamie. He was a limb and a handfu', but as weel-meanin' a lad as ever wore shoe leather, and wore it oot at a sad rate. 'Twas naught but bairn's mischief in him. See ye yon——'

Mrs. Anderson took down a framed photograph from the wall and put it into Morris's hand. It was only a postcard, a picture taken by a travelling photographer; but he had caught Jean's expression. Morris dared not look at it as long as he desired. He would have given Mrs. Anderson ten pounds for the picture willingly, and she loved a bargain, but this one could not be struck.

'That's the bonnie, brave lassie who should ha' been here to mak' ye feel at hame at Gairlie,' said Mrs. Anderson.

Morris quite agreed.

'Who is she?' he asked, looking at the picture again.

'Wha is she? The dochter o' yon feckless lad, Francis Grame, friend to Mr. Eustace, and who lived at Gairhe through all his twa bairns' lives, but never made much of a job at livin' anywhere, though he could cure folks wi' uncanny stuff at times.'

'He were a master 'and wi' a sick cow,' said Jock.

'But he could ne'er mak' a livin'; and when he died, and Mr. Carmichael died, the hoosie was none o' Jean's nor Jamie's. So they packed up their traps and away to London, afore ye could come on the scene and find 'em here. 'Twas to a rich auntie they went. But she wasna Jamie's auntie, and I'm sore feared sometimes that Miss Jean has not tellt me all, because she's in a sair fix. They was like my own, and there's whiles I canna bear it. They ne'er ought to ha' been turned oot.'

'Woman, woman!' expostulated Jock.

'I dinna care, Jock,' replied his wife.

'You are quite right, Mrs. Anderson,' said Morris quietly. 'My lawyer tells me that Miss Grame could not be found. But it is only you who have told me her name. Mr. Flear said that you constantly spoke of her by her Christian name, and that she had gone away of her own free will, and that he could not trace her. I have come north now largely to ask you about her. I have never felt

comfortable about the matter, nor did I know that she had a little brother. If I had known that, I might have traced her more easily.'

'God forgive me, but I lost yon lawyer's letter. It fell into the fire when I was not by, and I hadna the address. I meant to write to Miss Jean and tell her to gan to yon lawyer herself, but she hadna let me know where to write again. So there it is.'

'Yes, it has been a tangle,' replied Morris. 'But I won't rest until I straighten it.'

'Praise the Lord!' ejaculated Mrs. Anderson. 'Are ye married, sir?'

'No!'

'Praise the Lord again. Are ye spoken?'

'N—no,' said Morris.

'Ye're sure?'

'I am sure—at present,' smiled Morris.

'Eh, but I did my best to persuade Miss Jean, the bonnie doo, to bide here until ye'd come north and seen her. Then, if ye had not a wifie at present, I knew ye could not see the lassie and not love her. I'd a gey fine wedding in my eye in yon auld kirkie. But she wouldna bide. It seemed but to set her off sooner-like.'

Morris laughed.

'I am sure it would. I will find the lassie, Mrs. Anderson,' he said, putting down his empty cup, knocking the ashes from his pipe, and preparing to go across to the old house.

When he had gone, Mrs. Anderson raked out the ashes.

'He'll find the lassie, and he'll marry her,



Jock,' she said, poker in hand, turning to her spouse.

'Eh! woman, ye think ye ken a lot, and can manage more,' was Jock's reply. 'My opinion is as he kens noo where the lassie is.'

'Jock Anderson!' cried his wife. But she returned to her onslaught on her kitchen grate, and said no more.

The same afternoon, business took Ruth Robhart up West, where she did not often go in daylight. She had been summoned by a client who was furnishing, and who had discovered Ruth's talent for colour. Moreover, business had been so prosperous since Christmas, that Ruth had taken an assistant, who was learning to choose pottery and match shades under her guidance. Altogether things felt hopeful to Ruth Robhart as she turned out of Buckingham Gate, and thought she would cross the Park. There was a scent like wallflowers in the spring wind, although the sunshine was misty.

'It's not summer yet; but it's a day to look forward,' said Ruth to herself as she stepped along under the budding trees, nodded to a few daffodils, and listened to a thrush.

Then her attention was attracted to a crowd. Such a thing was familiar enough in Hyde Park; but as Ruth went on, paying no attention to it, she was suddenly arrested by a voice. It came from a man who was standing on a platform, haranguing his listeners vehemently in a tone that carried through the



clear April air. Ruth stood still, her heart beating hard. She had once listened to that voice as if the world held no sweeter music. As she heard it now in Hyde Park where thrushes sang, it seemed a bit raucous.

Ruth walked up to the crowd and mingled with its outskirts. A stylishly-dressed woman stood on the platform beside Ralph Hope. When he scored a point, she clapped her white gloved hands, and the speaker flushed slightly. He was talking well, and he had always spoken sense. He evidently had his subject at heart, and knew it thoroughly. But to Ruth, standing on the edge of his crowd, and not caring very much what his propaganda was, it was plain that he wanted more to impress the woman beside him than to push his points with those who listened. Some of them barely understood his language, which had lost something of its former simplicity, and grown rather fine. Ruth turned away. She had not seen the man since they parted, though she read his name constantly.

'He was always ambitious,' she said aloud, with a slight shrug of her spare shoulders. 'Yes, Ralph was ambitious; and he had the gift of the gab. It carries you far.'

Ruth crossed the Park; but she was suddenly tired. She went to the nearest station, and came above ground again close to Pilgrim Street. When she reached No. 8, she dismissed her young assistant, left her shop to its devices, and shut herself up in the sitting-room behind.

'I expect I want a cup of tea,' she said, stirring the fire, putting on the kettle, and looking round for her roasting fork. As she did so, the shop bell tinkled.

'Botheration!' exclaimed Ruth. 'I thought everybody else would have gone away to tea.'

She went into the shop, and found Henry Magson, standing rather awkwardly with his hand on the table in the middle of the shop.

'I just - er - wanted a bit of a vase or something to cheer up my sitting-room,' he said. 'I think I've just found out how dull it is, and you've got some pretty things here. Maybe you would advise me to a good choice. I've made a bit of money lately, and I must titivate things up, and get a new carpet, or maybe one or two o' those rugs you have 'ere. What do you think?'

He looked solemn and anxious; and Ruth smiled, though there was pity and even sympathy in her smile. She had long ago read his heart, and she knew that disappointment would be his lot, as it had been hers.

'Are you busy?' inquired Mr. Magson.

'I was just going to have tea,' replied Ruth easily. 'Come in, and have a cup with me. We can discuss colour schemes for your room if you like, and then I will see what I can do for you.'

Henry Magson brightened, and accepted with alacrity. The April world was pretty drear to him, but it somehow brightened. He was not without philosophy, and though

he felt disheartened, Essence of Youth was already booming, and he was sure of its success.

Ruth's tiny parlour was very attractive: She went into the pantry to make the tea, and Henry rubbed his hands together, and looked into the fire and up at the willowcatkins in a blue jar on the mantelshelf. Jean Grame would for ever occupy a shrine in his soul where none could compete with her. But she was not for him. In his inmost soul he had known that from the beginning. Nor was she a business woman. Though charmingly courteous to customers and to himself, she was not really interested in the shop behind the coloured bottles. Ruth Robhart loved colour, and was as capable as himself. She was plain, and she could be abrupt in manner. But her eyes were kind and a wee bit lonely, and he wanted a woman on his hearth as well as in a sacred shrine. Moreover, he knew that Ruth was a careful soul like himself, and, also like himself, had a secret passion for children.

So they sat over their tea, and were very comfortable, and grew confidential. Henry told the story of the Essence of Youth, and begged Ruth's acceptance of a bottle. In return she asked his advice about a small difficulty with a customer; and he was so helpful and sympathetic, that she wondered why it had never occurred to her to ask him for help before. He was struck with her business acumen. She was impressed with

his kindly honesty. When they parted, Henry Magson carried away with him a picture of a very pleasant fireside and a very comforting hour. Ruth felt almost lonely, as she washed up the teacups and plates for two, and blue and flame-coloured pottery did not seem quite so soul-satisfying as usual. She laughed herself out of such a notion. But she went to bed thinking of Henry Magson, not as a knight, but as a very kindly, reliable, and withal intelligent little man. And that kind wears well in the long run.

## CHAPTER XII.

### For Other Folk.

He canna sing for the sang that his own he'rt raises,  
He canna see for the mist that's afore his een,  
And a voice drouns the hale o' the psalms an' the  
paraphrases,  
Cryin' 'Jean, Jean, Jean!'

*Violet Jacob.*

**I**T was fated to be a very eventful Good Friday in Pilgrim Street, and it began with an unprecedented thing. Birds were singing; clouds were white and fleecy in the blue; and the night before, Ruth Robhart had received an urgent summons to go down and say a last farewell to an aged cousin in the country. To Ruth's surprise, this old person proposed to leave her his small property, and she persuaded Jean to go with her, as she was both nervous and shy.

Jean wanted to help Ruth, and she loved the suggestion of a day in the country; but it was scarcely an expedition which could include Jamie. Good Friday was a holiday in Brunswick Square, and Mrs. Spender promised to keep a vigilant eye upon that young man. Richard Pryme had an old friend visiting him; so Jean would not beg an asylum for

Jamie in Royal Square. She left him to his own devices, with a good deal of trepidation and all sorts of admonishments; but she forgot to ask him not to go off after raggle-taggle gypsies.

Jamie Grame did not feel well when he went to bed the night before; but he would have suffered untold tortures rather than tell Jean of that fact. Earlier in the day he had sat with his feet in a puddle for a considerable time, having an argument with a friend, and then had gone to school in wet and rather unseaworthy boots. His throat was sore before four o'clock, and his dead mother had left him the inheritance of a delicate chest. He said nothing about the pain in it when Jean kissed him in the early morning, reminded him again to give no trouble to Mrs. Spender, and went off with Ruth, having no idea of what he was stifling, and thinking him sleepy. Mrs. Spender brought up Jamie his breakfast, and he sat in bed in his little scarlet jacket and enjoyed life. Then, to her pleased amazement, he fell asleep, until she roused him to say that it was dinner-time. Over dumplings and syrup in the basement Jamie felt better, his throat was soothed, and Mrs. Spender did not observe that his voice grew hoarser every moment. She suggested that he sat on the rug in the sky parlour with a new story-book, and said that after tea she would take him to hear lovely music at church.

The prospect intrigued Jamie; but he began to feel bored on the rug, and his chest hurt.

He rummaged in his toy-box, and came on the little card with the words which he once copied on the stones of Staple Inn. It put it into his head to play pavement-artist again, and he looked longingly at the old folk rhyme, and at a stick of bright red chalk which lay beside it.

Friday Christ died upon the tree  
For other folk as well as me.

'That's to-day,' said Jamie reverently. 'Jean said so. She told me not to be noisy; but she didn't tell me not to go out. The sun's shining, and per'aps I shouldn't feel so nasty and tight if I went out into the fresh air. Of course I'm not going after no gypsies, though Jean didn't say anything about them this morning. I'm just going for—a walk.'

Jamie did not trouble to find his hat, though he did stop to drag on an old overcoat. When he found himself beyond the little streets that he knew, and walking down Southampton Row in the direction of Kingsway, he had a slightly uncomfortable feeling that Jean might scent raggle-taggle gypsies in his objective; but there were none about as he crossed the road riskily, caring little for traffic, which somehow always managed to avoid him. He suddenly remembered the church and the lovely music. He thought he would go there and surprise Mrs. Spender. He knew the way, and he plunged into a network of streets, quiet and free from business to-day, as if it had been Sunday morning. Jamie forgot that it was tea-time; for the pain in his



chest was growing worse, and a chill wind seemed to be blowing the sunshine away.

Jamie crossed an open, dirty, paved space. Scraps of garbage and remains of vegetables lay about. Big sheds were closed, no donkey-carts could be seen, and hardly a person passed.

There was the old church to which Jean and Jamie often came on Sunday morning. Jean liked to show him the great plain cross between two pictures, and above the bunches of flowers, which had been put there by the poor people. It was on the church wall, looking down on the donkey-carts. Jean had said that it meant the same as the old rhyme from Ruth's shop window.

Jamie knew the way into the church. You went down a quiet street, in at an archway, and then you were in a garden with wide cosy seats for tired people and thrushes singing in the laurel bushes. Jean and Jamie had often sat there on sunny Saturdays because they had no garden of their own.

Opposite to the seats the steps before the church door were broad and shallow, and the door itself was open. Jamie got out his bit of red chalk, and knelt on the top step. It was delightful to chalk the little rhyme there, and he had improved in writing since the day he first chalked it in Staple Inn.

He had just finished his task, and was thinking how well he had done it, when a fearful pain in his side made him double up his small body and catch his breath, which



JAMIE GOT OUT HIS BIT OF RED CHALK AND KNELT  
ON THE TOP STEPS.



would hardly come. He wished he were at home in his bed on the couch, in the corner of the sky parlour, with Jean giving him a hot drink. But Jean was away in the country, and at that moment a mist came before the eyes of Jamie Grame, and he was not quite sure of the way back to Pilgrim Street, for things seemed to swim round him in a curious fashion.

He got on to his feet and dragged his little person into the porch. It was warmer there, nobody seemed about, and out of the church came the sound of softly-played processional music such as the soul of Jamie Grame loved without knowing it. He forgot his pain, and the church looked dimly lighted and cosy as he peeped inside the door. It was a plain, homely Jacobean church, with wide, low, roomy pews and old-fashioned panelling. Jamie liked it because on its wall was a picture of the Christ Child, and so the church seemed to belong to a boy like him.

'Hoots! but I'll just go in and rest myself a bit,' whispered Jamie to himself. 'And maybe Mrs. Spender will come soon, and after she'll show me the way home. 'Tisn't the gypsies—it's church. Jean can't say anything, and it's warm in here.'

Jamie shivered as he crept up the aisle. He was feeling very bad now. A horrible hot-and-cold queer sort of sensation ran up and down him. He had an all-overish, lost-dog feeling that was worse than pain, and he was not quite certain that he could keep from

crying. He reached the pew where he and Jean often sat. It had a red baize cushion and hassock, and a hot-water pipe ran along it on the floor. Jamie sat down on the seat, and then he tumbled on to the hassock. The cushion slid after him and lay warm on top of him. The hot air came comfortingly from the pipe. The music went on above his head, and it was all very pleasant and soothing and warm, and good fortune seemed to slide into his body, though he was hardly conscious of it. In spite of the pain in his side and the splitting ache of his head, Jamie Grame was asleep.

There were times and seasons in the church year when Aunt Helena Charwood was always seen in a certain pew in a certain old church in Central London, where she had worshipped with her father when she was a girl; and the evening of Good Friday, strange to say, was one of them. Her late father had been fond of a tuneful type of church music, and Mrs. Charwood was one of those who declare that what is good enough for their father will do for them. Only a serious matter could have kept her away, therefore, from this annual service, and her taxi stopped at the entrance to the archway in very good time, for she liked to choose her seat.

It was not yet dark in the April evening when Aunt Helena approached the steps. And there, as she was about to enter the church,

she was stopped still and suddenly by two lines of writing in scrawled red chalk that were familiar without her knowing that they were:

Friday Christ died upon the tree  
For other folk as well as me.

Mrs. Charwood passed into the familiar church with a conflict of feelings in her bosom. This old church always gave her an attack of something which had never had a name for her yet. It was full of ghosts. Yet she could not help coming here. She walked up the aisle, seeing that straight-backed old man her Victorian father, herself as an angular, arrogant girl, full of self-confident egotism, only she gave it another name, and—Alice. Just Alice—she never tacked any adjective on to Alice. One does not with the people one loves best. Jealously, narrowly, and tyrannically, Helena had loved Alice. The love was real enough.

The ghost of Alice fled before her along the aisle to-night: Alice in a muslin gown, a coquettish scarf, Alice as a little girl with curls, Alice as—a bride. And Alice's child—her sister had turned from the door.

Mrs. Charwood rustled into the pew which had once been her father's. She knelt for an instant, settled her skirts, removed her big warm coat, for the church was rather overheated, and then suddenly was arrested by something on the floor. She observed that the cushion had fallen from the seat, and she frowned. As it was, she did not

approve of the vicar's eccentric practices—chalking his pavement, for instance, and evidently his caretaker was as free-and-easy as himself.

At that moment the vicar came down the aisle in his cassock, walking towards the vestry with a broad, pleased smile on his face. He had just read the old folk-rhyme on his doorstep, and he wished that he had thought of putting it there himself.

Helena Charwood was going to speak to him; but she saw his smile, and he never saw her. She stooped instead in dudgeon to pick up the cushion, gingerly, in her white hands, when she started back and almost exclaimed aloud in church. Under the long cushion lay a little boy, in a kilt and a shabby coat, with a rough tow head, and flushed cheeks, fast and heavily asleep.

Mrs. Charwood's first thought was of infection. This was what came of such innovations as opening churches at night as shelters. Homeless children appropriated them by day. The boy must be wakened and turned out. Mrs. Charwood looked round for the verger, but he was nowhere to be seen; and meanwhile the congregation was assembling, violins were tuning in the gallery, and the hour of service was very near.

The musical service in this church among the markets was never thronged. The same people came year by year, and very often Mrs. Charwood was left in sole possession of the pew that her father had once rented.



She sat down again in it now, at a loss, discomfited, angry, yet hardly knowing what she felt or why she felt it. Again the softening influence of the place came over her. Again she saw the ghosts in the pew. Somehow they took into their embrace and included the laddie who slept, unconscious, at her feet. Mrs. Charwood could not rouse him, and suddenly did not want to try. As the choristers filed into the old stalls, and the organ burst triumphantly into an opening refrain that Mrs. Charwood had admired in her youth, she stooped and gently dropped her warm coat over Jamie. He just sighed, and stretched out a bare leg under it luxuriously. Even in his heavy sleep he knew that he was ill; but he thought he was in his own bed, he was so very, very comfortable.

Fling wide the gates,  
While the Saviour waits,  
To die on His passion day,

rang out the pure, fluting tones of the choristers, followed by the mellower voices of the men, while the organ rolled and pealed. It was not the finest of music. They were not classical words. But there was something haunting, heart-filling, in the lyric and the notes, that stayed in the memory for years, and came back with the years that had gone. And some of the gates of time were shut, and a few were opened wider, but not in the heart of Helena Charwood. She knew that as she listened, and then bowed her head

with her knees, lower than that haughty head had ever bowed before. She knew she had failed, and that her heart had grown cold as ice since those days that came back to-night with their old ghosts. 'For other folk!' was a phrase which had no place in her vocabulary of life. She knew that it was Jamie Grame asleep in the bottom of her father's pew. And when the haunting music ceased, and the last 'Amen' was said, Mrs. Charwood meant to take him home in a taxi and ask her sister's child to come and see her. Since the night when Alfred Charwood had upbraided his wife she had never been wholly comfortable; but she meant to get back some of her complacency to-night. She had reckoned without her own deeds, for that complacency was gone for ever, and in her heart she knew it.

The congregation began to leave the church, and suddenly Jamie awoke. He sat up, muffled in the big coat, and he cried out terrified, for he could not breathe. Mrs. Charwood leaned over him, and tried to lift him up; but he did not know where he was, nor what had happened; and both his courage and his manners suddenly left him.

'Jean!' he cried hoarsely, 'Jean! Jean!'

There was an awful rattle in Jamie's throat, and he tried to speak again, but could not, so cried out shrilly instead.

Three people at once made for the pew. One was the vicar, who knew Mrs. Charwood, and was full of concern, thinking that the

strange cries came from her. The others were Richard Pryme, who never missed this service, and a decently dressed, anxious-looking woman in black who had endured torments, not enjoyed music, during the last hour.

'God 'elp 'im! it's Jamie. Lor', but I am thankful!' exclaimed Mrs. Spender. 'Looked for 'im for an hour or more I did, near distracted, and 'is sister orf, and only came 'ere because I'd said as 'im and me would come. Oh, ain't he a limb.'

'I am afraid he is ill,' said Richard anxiously, looking down at the child who was lying on the seat now, and whose eyes were closed again, for he was fast lapsing into unconsciousness. 'Oh! if only Morris were not away.' He turned to the vicar.

'Can we have a taxi?' he asked quickly. 'The boy must be taken to my house; I know him well. There is a locum doing Dr. Warrenne's work in Pilgrim Street; and if it's serious, Morris must be sent for.'

The vicar looked up curiously, and then down at the shabby little boy.

'It's a bit like pneumonia,' he said; while Mrs. Spender cried out in distress.

'The pore lamb must come home,' she said.

'He'll be better with me,' put in Mr. Pryme. 'I'll ring up for a nurse just in case, and somebody must tell Jean. Where is she?'

Mrs. Charwood opened her lips to speak, but no words would come. Who were these people who took matters into their own hands? Where was her fancy picture of her drive to

Pilgrim Street with Jamie, and her reconciliation with Jean in the sky parlour, and then the homecoming to Bulow Place? Apparently it did not exist on solid earth.

'I am Miss Grame's aunt,' she suddenly said rather pompously. 'The little boy may be taken to my house in Bulow Place, where he will have every care. We had better take him home first, and pick up his sister.'

Helena Charwood turned to Mrs. Spender whom she recognized, but that independent charlady turned shrinking from her, and looked aghast at Mr. Pryme.

'Never!' she exclaimed theatrically. 'Why, sir, this is the 'eathen aunt wot turned the pore lambs from 'er door when they was wanderers in London. Jamie shan't cross her threshold with my consent.'

The vicar stifled a smile, and went away to whistle for a taxi. Mr. Pryme turned courteously to Aunt Helena.

'Perhaps you would allow us to retain your coat, madam,' he said, 'for the present. I am afraid if the little chap got another chill now——'

Mrs. Charwood waved acquiescence irritably; while Richard Pryme, with Mrs. Spender's help, dived into the pew, and tenderly lifted out Jamie.

'Where is Jean, Mrs. Spender?' demanded Richard rather breathlessly.

'Gorn inter the country ter to do a kind action,' was the reply.

'She'll be back to-night, I hope?'

'Lor', yes,' said Mrs. Spender. 'Do ye think as Pilgrim Street could get along for a night without Miss Jean?' Nor no other spot as 'as once 'ad 'er. There's one or two will find that out, bless 'er 'eart, the dear. Now then, there's a little gentleman. Comfy, ain't yer?'

Mrs. Spender was settling Jamie on the back seat of the taxi, looking round for Mr. Pryme, and quite forgetting Mrs. Helena Charwood, shivering behind her on the pavement without her big warm overcoat. Mrs. Charwood, however, was pulling herself together, though with chattering teeth. She positively skipped into the taxi, in Mrs. Spender's wake, and presently found herself seated in a big armchair before a gas-fire in Mr. Richard Pryme's little-used dining-room, waiting humbly, for her own coat, but apparently forgotten by the queer company of people who had borne Jamie upstairs in this strange old house.

A young doctor passed the window, and hurried into the house and upstairs. Then a taxi stopped, and two girls got out with Mr. Pryme. One of them re-entered it, and drove away; but the other was Jean, of whose white, distressed face Aunt Helena caught a glimpse, before she entered the hall and ran up to Jamie.

Nine o'clock struck, and after a time half past; still Mrs. Charwood sat still. What she thought about, and what passed before her inward eyes into her heart and her soul,

while she waited, she never told anybody; but probably she will never forget. She had had no supper. She was much too cold for a gas-fire in a big room to warm her. She was chastened, she was frightened of the moment when Jean should confront her, maybe to say that her little brother was dead. With all her heart Helena Charwood wished that she had never sent Jean out over that flawless doorstep in Bulow Place on a September evening. She dreaded going back to that immaculate house to-night. Her own husband would say, 'I told you so.' And in the shadows made in the room by an impersonal, imitation-looking gas-fire, Helena saw Alice's eyes.

The door suddenly opened, and closed again. Somebody made an exclamation, and switched on the light. There stood Jean, with her aunt's expensive coat over her arm, and the most humanly beautiful expression on her face which is ever seen in a woman's eyes—the look of compassion. She came up to the armchair, and held out her hand, with a look of shy hesitation, but a gesture of very sincere warmth.

'Aunt Helena,' she said, 'it is probably because you wrapped Jamie in your coat that he has stopped short at the edge of pneumonia. Thank you.'

Mrs. Charwood rose to her feet, which were so cold that she hardly knew whether she stood on them. But she had a strange new warm feeling about her heart.



'How—how is the child?' she asked hoarsely.

'The doctor thinks he will pull through, though he is pretty ill,' said the girl. 'He has opened his eyes and asked for Robin Gray. So I am going home to get his old wooden horse, and a nurse is coming. Mr. Pryme is so good to Jamie and me. I—I wish Dr. Warenne were at home; but he soon will be.'

'Jean—will you come home with me?'

Mrs. Charwood spoke wistfully. Jean hesitated for a second.

'I can't, auntie,' she said; 'or I would. These are my friends. They have been very good to me. Afterwards, if I may, I will come gladly to see you.'

'And Jamie with you?'

'And Jamie with me.'

Jean held out her aunt's warm coat, and the tall woman shrank shivering into it. Her face was grey and wan. She looked more than her years under her artificial devices for keeping them at bay.

'Maybe, Jean,' she said, and her words came with great difficulty, 'I have only understood the past. The present seems to me very difficult to understand.'

Jean was young, and she was very happy to-night, in spite of her anxiety. Things seemed to her simple and straightforward, and rather wonderful. But she was dreadfully, oh, tragically sorry for those who seemed to her old, and with so much of glorious living



adventure behind them. This was all in her eyes as she kissed her aunt.

'I think it's just the opposite with me,' she said. 'But I would like to learn all about the past from you, Aunt Helena.'

'Ah, I shall like to tell you, my dear,' said Mrs. Charwood in a strangely softened voice.

Aunt and niece went out into the gathering starlight of the April evening. A rush of youth and spring met them in the quiet of the old square. A taxi stopped at the door, and an immaculate nurse got out, while Mrs. Charwood took her place. Five minutes later she entered her husband's study in Bulow Place. He started up at her entrance, his face quite colourless under his sparse, neat hair.

'Helena!' he said, the telephone still in his hand, 'I've rung up five hospitals, and I was just going to try to get on to Scotland Yard.'

'I am not that kind of fool, Alfred,' replied Mrs. Charwood severely. 'I shall not go in for a sensational disappearance at my time of life. You need never ring up Scotland Yard.'

'Where have you been?' demanded Alfred blankly.

'With my niece and nephew,' was the laconic reply. 'In a day or a week we may have them here.'

'Good!' said Alfred, who as a lawyer had learnt the priceless lesson of when not to ask questions. 'I saw some wooden toys to-day

just asking to be bought. I always had a liking for wooden toys.'

'You had better purchase them,' said Mrs. Charwood graciously, ringing the bell to order sandwiches and coffee. She suddenly felt very tired and rather weak.

On the night of Easter Monday Morris Warenne turned his back once more on his inheritance in the north. He had not intended to do so; but the late and dilatory post-boy had brought him that morning a thick letter from Richard Pryme, written on Saturday, which immediately altered his plans. Moreover, he had ridden over the whole of his land with Jock Anderson, he felt as fit and fine as possible, and the quiet began to irk him. He told himself that he was a sociable cockney who could not stand solitudes; but the stretch of cliff, with the isles in the sea beyond, would have held him if Jean had been there.

As the dogcart waited at the door, he ventured to make one or two daring statements to Mrs. Anderson.

'Keep the old house aired,' he said. 'And gather together a few bits of furniture to make at least three rooms habitable. I shall send—that is, if I find Miss Grame and the little boy, I may persuade them to come down here. I will send some things beforehand—or maybe, I shall bring them myself. Ah—hum! That is, the laddie may be delicate——'

'He'd a sair chest had Jamie, like his mither,' said Mrs. Anderson.

'Yes—that is, had he?' replied Morris, who had never had in him the making of a diplomat.

Jock whipped up his horse, and the old cart was away over the moorland road.

'Ech, sirs!' ejaculated Mrs. Anderson, looking after them. 'Surely yon addle-headed Jock canna be richt, and he kens the laddie already.'

Morris was in his surgery at ten o'clock next morning, but did not oust the locum who was to do his duty until the end of the week. He heard the latest report, and a good one, of Jamie, and then made his way to Royal Square. Here he found a little boy in a scarlet jacket lying contentedly in bed, a smiling nurse knitting before the fire, and Mr. Pryme in his element, telling the most ridiculous and engaging fairy tale about a goblin with a cheerful heart which Jamie Grame had ever heard. Nurse was begging the old story-teller to make a book of it, when Morris walked in.

'I was expecting you, my lad,' said Richard. 'No, we don't expect Jean back from her work until the usual time. That soft-hearted employer of hers was for letting her off to-day; but it would have been sheer malingering on Jamie's part if he had kept her, and we do our jobs in this part of London, as you know. Apparently you could not keep away from yours, either. What an old idler I must seem myself in the middle of such industry! Well, how's Scotland? Made any wonderful

discoveries there? Got lost on any island, and had your eyes opened by the fairies—eh? So that you could see remarkable things under your nose, when you got back to town? I promised to meet you at the station, but you didn't give me the chance.'

'Oh, doctor!' put in Jamie eagerly. 'Did you really get lost on a magic island? Me and Jean never did. Maybe I will when I go back.'

'I got found, not lost,' said Morris. 'I've been to Gairlie, Jamie.'

'Yes,' croaked Jamie in a scratchy voice. 'But—but—you see, Jean said it wasn't good manners to talk about the place where you used to live.'

'Oh, she did, did she?' said Dr. Warenne. 'Well, when somebody has been to see your old home, it's different.'

'Is it?' said Jamie, impressed. 'Manners are awful puzzling. Jean says not if you learn them young.'

His hearers laughed, and went away to the library, leaving Jamie with the nurse. Morris did not go back to Pilgrim Street that day; but it seemed a long day before tea time came, and six o'clock struck, and Jean might be expected.

Morris had tried every device to while away the time. It was almost more than he could do to keep away from the shop behind the coloured bottles. He wanted to drag Jean away from it for ever; but he could not go and forcibly do that.

The library was beginning to lie in shadow, when at last Jean came along Royal Square and stopped at No. 15. It had been a day of surprises, and in her pocket was a fat roll of pound notes, her first royalty from the sale of her father's formula for Essence of Youth. Mr. Magson had had to show her very exact figures before she would accept it, but at last he had really proved that it was her own. All she could think of was those days when Clare had needed things which money could buy. But Clare had left Jamie, and Jamie should go back to the hills and the fairy isles.

After all, Morris did not hear Jean come upstairs, though he had been standing at the window like a boy to watch for her. He was tired of waiting, and he had flung himself down at the piano in the far alcove. Only one song could come to him—the sweet old words of Ben Jonson, which he himself had set to music:

Give me a look, give me a face,  
That makes simplicity a grace.

Jean heard the piano as she ran upstairs, and her heart quickened, though so far she had not very much associated Morris with music, and she thought he was in the Highlands. She did not know what he was playing softly to himself and singing under his breath. She thought Mr. Pryme was in the library. When she had spoken to Jamie, and had a word with the nurse, she went in search of the old man who had told her to make the whole of his house her own. Jean wanted to ask him

something; but Richard had gone out, and left a free field for Morris.

The music ceased as the library door opened rather slowly. Jean did not want to interrupt her old friend. She looked in, and for a moment thought the room was empty. Morris struck a chord, and suddenly darted into the song, playing it as a jocund measure. But he only reached the end of the second line. Then he sprang up and came towards Jean. They met in the middle of the long room, with its lining of books, wise and wonderful, but many of them love stories.

They had separated only less than a week before; but a long tract of time seemed to have passed, for it was filled with those events which make life. Each knew what the other knew—that Gairlie had been Jean's home, and why she had refused to marry Morris, though she loved and trusted him with all her heart.

The library was growing very shadowy. The fire leapt up as if in sympathy on the hearth.

'Jean!' Morris's voice was very tender. 'Jean! You won't refuse again. You know how much I want you. There is nothing in the world between us, my bonnie Jean. There never need have been. I have been to Gairlie. It ought to be yours, not mine.'

He was holding her hands. She was drawn into his arms. They were sitting on the wide couch before the fire, and his kisses were on her lips.

'It is you that I want, Jean,' said Morris

again. 'More than life—far, far more than anything that money could give me, or Uncle Carmichael could leave me. You'll come to me, won't you?'

'Yes, Morris.'

Jean spoke in a low voice, but very clearly, for she knew without a doubt or a shadow that she meant what she said. Every dark spot seemed to have rolled off her world, and the future lay beyond like a bright, light stream. Probably at some points it would be darkened, but there would be two to ford the dark, with courage, love, and hope.

'Why didn't you tell me that Gairlie was your home, and that you were the lass I was looking for?' said Morris.

'Oh, how could I? It would have been like asking——'

'Asking for nothing, you independent darling. You knew well that I wanted you.'

'I—wanted you, Morris.'

'Then Jamie can have Gairlie. My heart is in London, not the Highlands, and—where is yours, Jean?'

'With you,' said Jean, lifting her dark eyes full of happiness, and her lips for Morris to kiss as the door opened and Richard Pryme entered to give them his old-fashioned blessing.









